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The Children's
Sunday Hour

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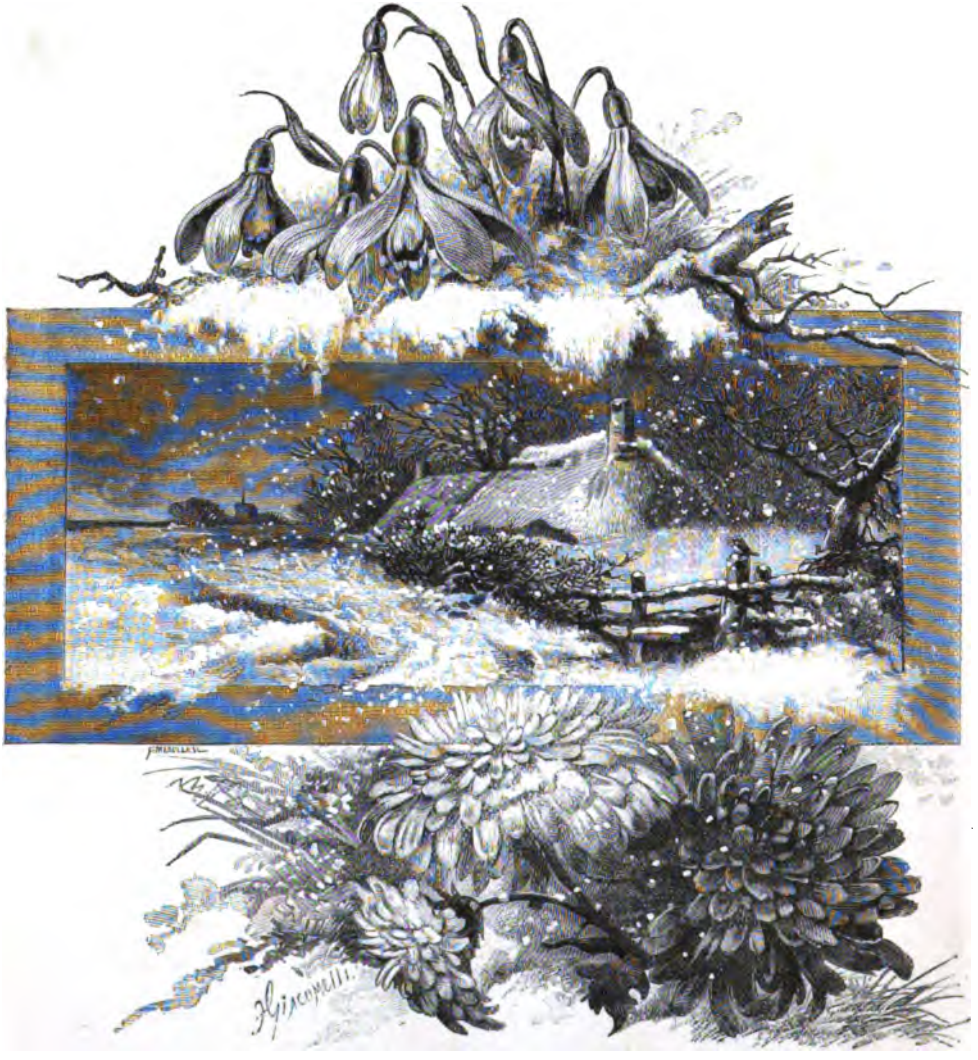

**" When the fields are broad sheets of snow and rivers are ice, where are the roses then ?"—*Page* 252.**

# THE
# CHILDREN'S SUNDAY HOUR

BY THE

REV. BENJAMIN WAUGH

AUTHOR OF "SUNDAY EVENINGS WITH MY CHILDREN," ETC.

*"First that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual."*—ST. PAUL.

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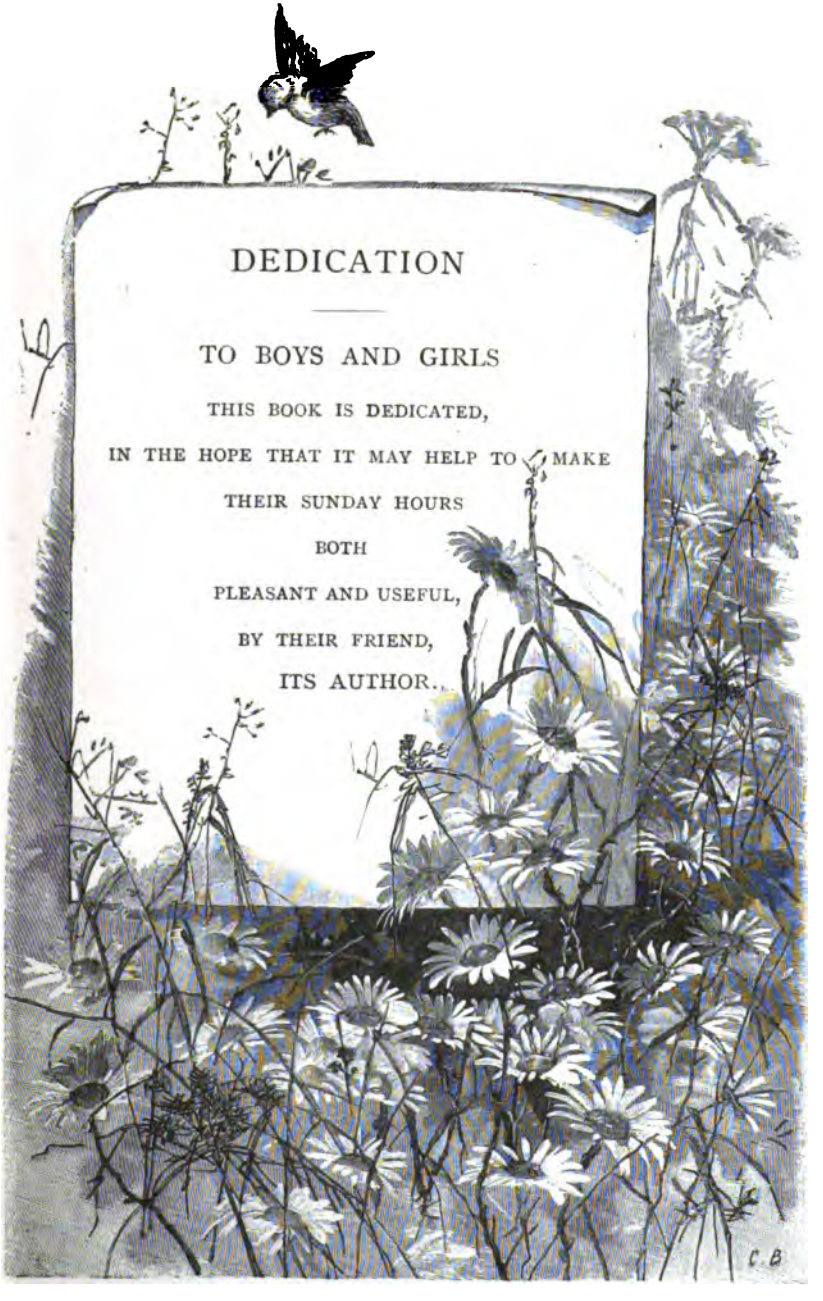
DEDICATION
TO BOYS AND GIRLS
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED,
IN THE HOPE THAT IT MAY HELP TO MAKE
THEIR SUNDAY HOURS
BOTH
PLEASANT AND USEFUL,
BY THEIR FRIEND,
ITS AUTHOR.
C. B

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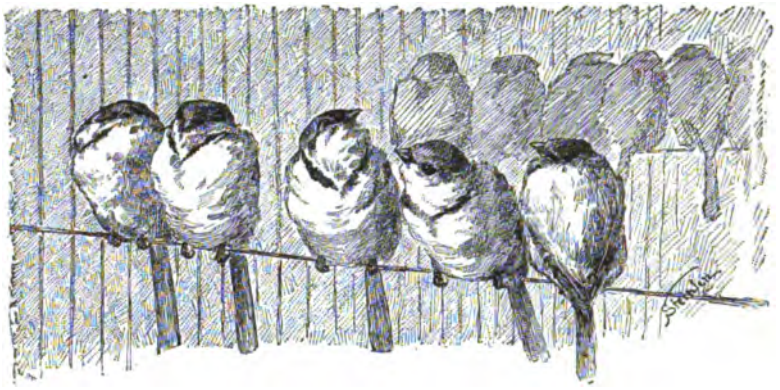

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## Chapter I.

# CHILD FOLLOWERS OF GOD.

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children."—*Ephesians* v. 1.

Come with me, my children, across seas and fields and strange cities, many miles away, to those big hills, the mountains of Switzerland, whose peaks are so high up that they seem almost to touch the deep blue heaven, and are always covered with white snows—snow now in winter

and in the burning summer when you, and these children that play at their feet, are wiping big drops of perspiration from your brows, and are glad to sit down in the shade. Down below the snows, torrents of foaming waters tumble and leap into the valleys, making rivers and lakes among the villages where the children live.

I want you to go with me half way up, between the villages and the white snows that touch the sky, to the rugged valleys and slopes of broken rocks, to see one of the freest, wildest, loveliest, little animals—the chamois. Its home is there.

It has a little nut-brown hairy body, graceful as a deer, with large bright round eyes, slender limbs, nimble little feet, brave fearless heart, and the surest foot; skipping along narrow jagged ledges, leaping chasms, bounding away up the heights, the very embodiment of joyous life. Happy as a flying bird, free as the fetterless winds, bright as a spring sunbeam is this little creature. It will climb anywhere, leap almost any chasm, and alight safely on a peak of a needle point.

I want you to see this chamois with its young. See, there is one tiny mite of a thing, the very image of its big mother, save that its little curved horns have not come upon its head yet. It knows nothing, has been nowhere, can do nothing, save feebly bleat and suckle. But it is a young chamois.

Did you ever think what a wonderful thing it is to be a child—only a child—a chamois' child, or eagle's child, any

creature's child, with the parents' blood throbbing in its veins, swelling in its heart—a child, nothing but a child?

That wee bit of a baby monkey, with its eyes scarcely big enough to open yet, we know will one day leap and laugh and twist, hang by its hands and swing by its tail, and scream for very joy away among the branches of the big trees, just as its comical old mother does now; for it is a monkey's child. It is asleep now, and when it wakes it will open its tiny round mouth for milk, and then go to sleep again. The helpless thing cannot do any more now but just that.

That little fluffy eagle, too, the majestic eagle's child, will some day spread its wide wings and sail abroad in air and sky, high over the highest mountains, higher than the clouds, and gaze with undimmed eye on the glory of the bare, noon sun. It will swoop down on its prey, smite with its huge wings, tear with its sharp talons, and make the valleys echo with the cries of its mighty voice. What a queer little bit of a thing it does seem, to be sure; and to do all that! It is only just out of its shell, a mere woolly little ball that can't stand up. Even to stretch out its two little crumpled-up legs is utterly beyond its power. The utmost it can do is just to lie still and open its wide yellow mouth.

Yet this helpless little mite is an eagle's child. Eagle's blood runs in its young veins, eagle's powers lie in its limbs, and it *will* do what eagles do, one day. The children of pigeons, or hens, or ducks can never be

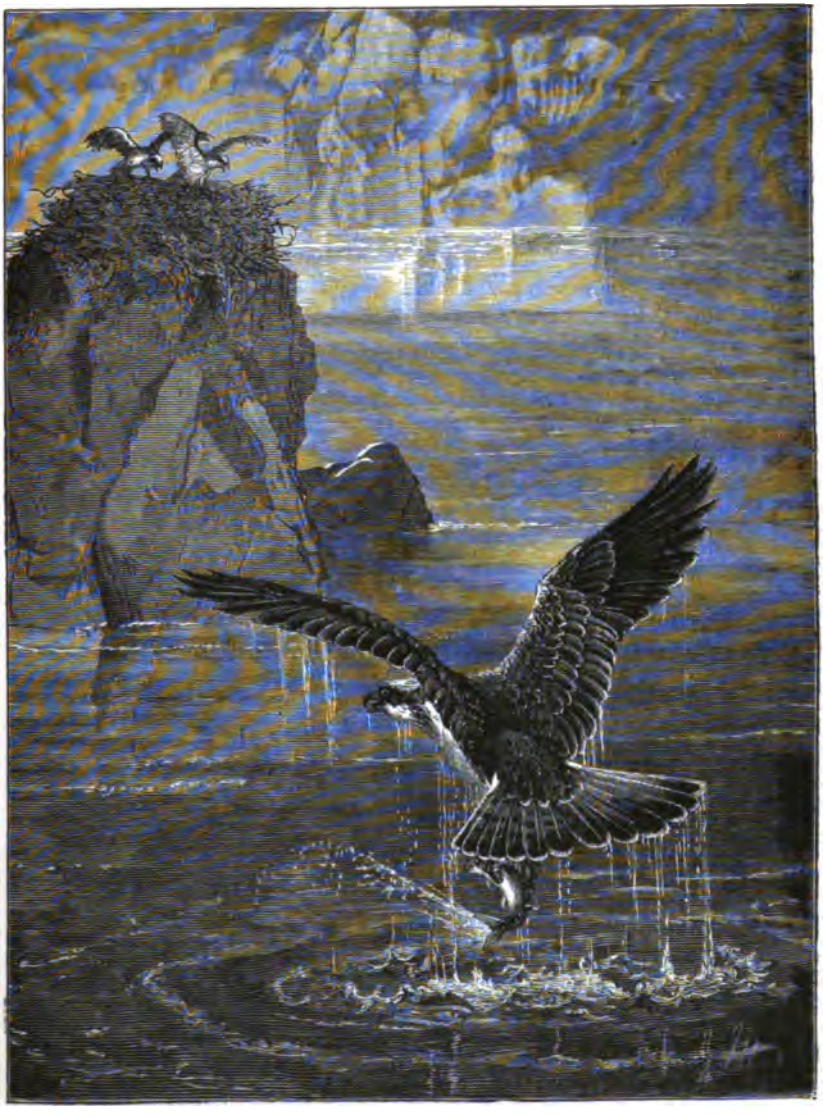
children of the eagle. They can hop about the stable yard, or sail on a pond. The tinest baby among them all has power to become a perfect pigeon, or hen, or duck, perfect as its parent. And the young eagle has done no more when he at length wheels and whirls in the upper air and plays above the mackerel scales of the sky.

And the little chamois, only a few short days in the world, has the same power to become perfect as its parent chamois is perfect. But look at it now.

Mother and child are seeking cooler air and sweeter, more luscious grass, away yonder up nearer the white snow. The near, straight way is right along narrow steep ledges, but they will be too narrow for those tiny shaky little legs; and across rough stones, over which the mother could easily bound, but they are far, far too big for such feebleness. She, too, could clear the wide, deep chasms which yawn that way.

Now watch the mother. She goes quite out of that way, chooses smoother little paths that rise by easier slopes, where the leaps are but an inch or two at most. She goes just as the baby that follows her can go. She is touched with the feeling of its infirmities; her tenderness empties her of all the grand things that belong to herself. She willingly takes a baby's way, and walks at a baby's pace.

While others are leaping crags and bounding abysses in the full strength and joy of their powers, she makes herself of no reputation, is found in fashion as her child.



"Helpless little mites."

No one laughs at the tiny steps she takes, the number of times she stops, while her unpractised little charge breathes and bleats. Those bounding creatures would all gladly do the same had God given them a tiny kid to train.

All love becomes poor, my child, however rich, because it is love, for its loved ones, because its loved ones are dearer far than its riches. Itself is nothing, they are everything. It is so with all parents. They are all alike, both humblest and greatest, just because they are all more or less like God.

Now look again and watch that little creature of God. She has jumped a tiny chasm, and is now looking back to see how those four little limbs that she loves are following her. The leap is made, then she licks the little cheek with her rough tongue. The kid gains confidence and takes heart, and still follows close upon its mother's heels.

At length it learns that there are no ledges too wide, there are no depths to fear, no task to shun where a mother leads. Day after day they practise, line upon line, here a little and there a little; the mother leads, the child follows; each lesson is suited to growing strength till the baby kid is youth, and youth, full-grown, laughs at danger and bounds like the wind. He is perfect as his parent is perfect.

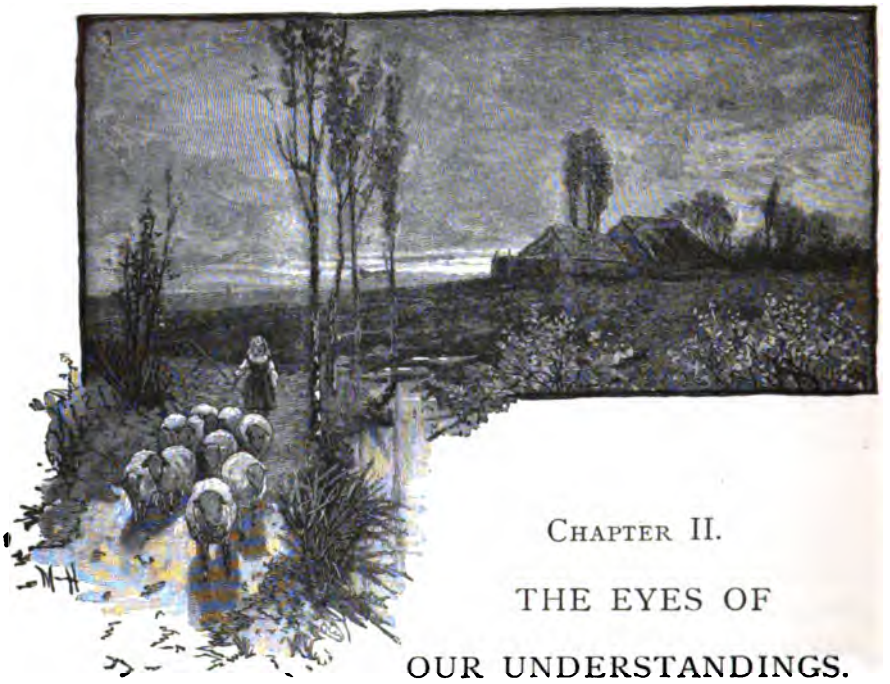
Now listen to the entreaty of Paul, "Be ye followers of God, as dear children." God is a beautiful Spirit, and you

are His "dear children;" therefore try to do what He does, and to be beautiful as He is beautiful.

God was in Jesus; and His first lesson to His little ones God sets in Jesus, who was obedient and lovely at home, and had the kindly thought of His neighbours. These are God's early lessons for His tiny child. They are but little things, but you must be faithful in little to be faithful in much. You must *begin* to be perfect.

Jesus followed the little leadings of God in the house at Nazareth, first. Afterwards, as He grew in strength, He grew in the brightness of His Father's glory. Be ye therefore followers of God, and remember that Christ was following Him when, in the little duties and behaviours of common daily life, He was a "dear child" to His parents on earth, and a "dear child" to His neighbours and companions.

Be you therefore *dear children*, and you will be like Jesus the child, and like Him, too, you will please your Father who is in heaven.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE EYES OF OUR UNDERSTANDINGS.

"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened."—*Ephesians* i. 18.

Now I want you to remember that there are eyes not only in the sockets of your skull, like the eyes in the faces of dogs and horses, but that there are eyes in your understandings. God sees Jesus as the most lovely and glorious being in all earth or heaven, because He understands Him. Some men and women see Jesus in the same way, because they see what He is and why He came. And others don't know or understand anything about Him, and, consequently, see no beauty in Him at all. All the difference is in the eyes of their understandings.

Look, now, at that young man as he goes by the window, where we will fancy ourselves sitting to look out on what may be seen in the street below. He is a poor lumbering sort of person, with coat and trousers which might have been turned out of an old-clothes shop, and then hung in the wind and rain and sun for a year before they were worn by him. And he is limping.

"Nothing there to see," you say.

You'd rather see that soldier, with his tossing plume, six bands of braid, and glittering helmet, and big scarlet breast with three gold and silver medals on it. Maybe a string of mountebanks would please you still better—the big man in his quaint dress, with his drum and his little train of round-limbed, spangled children, with their tambourines and little coats of as many colours as Jacob made for Joseph. Or perhaps a splendid horse tossing its beautiful head with its bridle tassels, and prancing with its rider, and a beautiful hound at its heels, would please you better still.

But I don't think it will be so if the eyes of your understandings are enlightened. So let us go back to the days of that limping man's childhood.

His name is Edwin Parker, but his friends still call him, man as he is, Teddy, the name he had when a little shepherd lad of nine years old, the time when my tale happened. He was a real shepherd though but nine years old, and very little indeed for his age; for, besides being born of shepherd parents in a shepherd's solitary hut up away

among the mountains, his father just then was ill, too ill far to do any of his work; so Teddy had to go out with the clever old shepherd dog, Sandy, and gather the flocks together. He was never so proud as when doing anything for his father at any time, but he was especially so now that his father was poorly; for he had a sensible, kindly little heart.

His father had now been poorly for some days, sitting up in his chair in his cold, damp hut, which did not help to get him better.

As he sat by the log-fire wrapped up in blankets, he shivered and he coughed and coughed till it seemed as if he must lose his breath and die; and the doctor lived nearly seven miles away, and there was no one to go, and no postman to pass their door who could take a letter or a message. For days they often saw not a soul. It was bitterly cold, too, and the early snow lay already thick upon the tops of the mountains, and at times, the last day or two, it had fallen all round about the cottage, and quite low down into the valley below, for it was the beginning of winter.

Teddy asked himself what was to be done for his father. That cough went right to his boy's heart, and seemed to tear through it. When his father was well he had told Teddy tales, and they had laughed together, but now the boy was not happy; he could not laugh; he could not even sleep. At night he lay wide awake for what seemed to him long hours—I dare say they were not quite what they

seemed—listening to his father's cough, which was worse at night; and he cried in his bed and felt utterly wretched.

One morning the boy saw the mournful face of his mother sitting again at the window, hoping that some one would chance to pass who could be entrusted with a message to the doctor; but nothing passed except the cold winds which came down the mountain and mourned among the branches of the pines as they passed; and the boy could bear it no longer. He went out and attended to the sheep quickly, then put on his best cap, and with his shepherd's staff in his hand and a lantern (for the moon might not be up when he came home) he presented himself to his mother and said—

"Let me go, mother. I can do it very well. I did it at Martinmas fair."

"Yes," she said, slowly and softly, and surveying him mournfully, "Yes, but your father was with you then."

She was a good mother and a good wife, but she was no walker; to her the journey was altogether out of the question, and the thought of Teddy's going fell sadly on the poor woman's heart. She looked out at the sky, black and awful with snow-clouds, and at the snow-covered summits of the great hills, and she listened to the loud roar of the swollen stream and the wailing of the wind. She was in painful doubt, was the woman. What ought she to do?

Then she thought that if the big dog Sandy went with him he might be safe, for the dog knew the way the path

ran as well as her husband. But Teddy was so very little, and it was such a long, weary way.

But the child had no terror; his face was bright with serious earnestness; and his mother's terror for him vanished as the cough sounded behind her. So, drawing his muffler a little tighter about his throat, and looking to his candle and his boots, she bade him go.

He was a mountain-born boy, and thought little at any time of a mile or two's walk or a steep hillside climb; but this journey was in all fourteen miles.

When he had been to the "Martinmas fair," he remembered that for days after he had been footsore and very weary, yet then he had ridden parts of both ways on his father's back. So he well knew that it would make him tired; but if it made him tired for a hundred years, he would go! Indeed, all he thought of was his father—his father and that cough; and he was happy to go, and set off tripsomely and with a song. He knew the way that the cart-tracks ran, and the dog Sandy knew it too; and the loneliness of the way was nothing to him, for he was an only child, and from his solitary homestead on the hill it was some miles away to any other house.

So with a brave heart, intent only on getting some physic for that cough, for he felt it would kill his father if it was not cured, the little man set out on his happy way to the town, with his delighted, barking dog leaping around him, a little staff in one hand, and a lantern with an unlighted candle in it in the other, and a tinder-box in his pocket.

He went the right way down through the high woods, and over the stepping-stones and the little stone bridge, and by the stone quarry, and through the Low Wood, and down into the valley, then along the footpath and over the stile, along the road by the river side, and into the little town where the doctor lived, and across the great open market-place with the stone cross on the steps in the middle of it, to where the doctor's house was, which had in it the precious physic for which he had come.

From the market-place he cast a passing look up at the broad white snows on the top of the big hill yonder, just above where his home was, where his father was coughing, and higher still at the black storm-clouds, which hovered like a big black vulture above it; then he rang the surgery bell.

When the door was opened he almost darted through, and the next minute he stood in a room lined with shelves full of bottles, and was happy. They were to cure people.

He told his tale, and they mixed him something in a great big bottle. He was glad it was big. It would be sure to cure his father. Big things were always clever. And he stood and warmed his hands and his toes at the blazing fire; but his heart was warmest, for he was already fancying his father better. He paid his mother's half-crown, and put the bottle inside the bosom of his little buttoned jacket, and set out with quite a light, brisk step home again; for happy hearts make nimble feet.

The woman at the toll-gate just outside the town spoke to him. Where was he going?

"To Caterick's Tarn," he answered.

She looked gravely at the heavy frowning sky, then at Teddy, then at her clock, and seeming, after all, to be in doubt what to say, she said with a sigh—

"Well, get along; your bottle will be wanted."

He was a long way past the stile, and had crossed the Low Wood and the first stone bridge again, when little flakes of soft white snow came sailing down through the air, and by the time he was half-way home the cart-track was quite obscured, and the hillside was one thin, wide sheet of snow.

He was not frightened, for the snow ceased, and the moon was shining right on the hill, and he could still see the familiar landmarks, and away up there the straggling pines just below the tarn where his home was, and old Sandy led the way. So he trudged contentedly along.

Then the moon was hidden, and it was dark, very dark.

He stood still a moment, and lighted his little lantern. It was a difficult task, for the wind was rising and lifting the snow, and blowing it round in sweeping rings; but he was not frightened of either the wind, or the snow, or the dark. He hardly gave them a thought, for he was feeling a bottle buttoned at his breast full of help for his father, and that filled him with joyous love—the kind of love which the Bible calls "perfect" love, love which does not

seek its own but another's good; and that, the Bible also says, always casts out fear.

The cold was intense, so at least said his toes and finger-ends; but because his father was at home sitting up in his chair before the fire coughing, cold was nothing to him.

The road was slippery. His feet, too, caught and stumbled against roughnesses on the ground which made walking tedious and exhausting; but not until he tripped and only just saved himself from a fall did he feel distressed, for then the thought flashed like lightning into his little mind—

"Oh, if I break this bottle!"

Then he took the muffler off his throat, and took the precious bottle out of his bosom and carefully wrapped the soft muffler round and round the bottle, and put it back into his jacket again, which was no easy task, for it was a huge bundle now. He did not half mind tumbles and hurts for himself, but if he broke the bottle! The mere thought of it he scarcely knew how to bear.

He was missing the road, too, and he knew it; at least, it seemed to him that he had got a little out of it; for there were no walls, nor hedges, nor fences that he might feel to guide him. There was nothing but open, bare, wide hillside, now one great breadth of snow, and it was dark.

"Where is the road?" he said, straining his eyes into the darkness, and he felt about with his hands down in the snow, and tried to find signs of the track in that way.

But it was farther from him than he thought. To have found it in the daylight would have puzzled him, and older heads than his, and now it was pitch dark. And he was only nine years old.

If he could but find his home! In spite of himself he began to be alarmed.

He was weary and bitterly cold. And how long he was! And the waste and the darkness and the silence seemed all against his reaching home with the physic. His poorly father was his sole anxiety. He pressed along his way. He wished that the moon would soon come out. It seemed days since he began his ascent.

And what *was* the matter with the dog? The dog was becoming a nuisance; it barked and yelped and leaped at him, and hindered him. A hundred times he bade it "lie down;" but at every step he took, it more frantically leaped against him, and seemed intent on knocking him over. He was angry; he had lost his path; the road was slippery and steep; he was tired and could not get along, and his dog seemed mad.

Just then his feet slipped among the loose stones, and he fell headlong, and his lantern door flew open and the candle came out into the snow. Then he felt about for it, but could not find it. And now, bewildered, and angry with his dog, and sick at heart, in the darkness and waste, and all alone, the little man sat down and cried.

Then he recovered himself, picked up his lantern, and got on to his feet again and set himself to the road. Then

he found that he had left his staff behind him, and the dog began again to whine and to pester him more furiously than before. Whatever craze had taken it? But he thought of his father and his cough, and his father perhaps dying—perhaps dead—and all for want of this physic in his bosom there, which he was so long in bringing; and he took heart, and kept pushing the dog away, and plodded on.

In two steps more he felt the snow yield under the foot he put out; it went down, down; he was falling through the air. He had scarcely uttered his little "Oh!" when, with a heavy thud, which filled him with pain, he reached some ground, and was lying on a deep boss of snow somewhere. He felt he was killed. Was the bottle broken too? He reached his hand to his bosom, for he still feared nothing on his own account. As his hand touched the bundle, he suddenly became stiff and unconscious and felt no more.

The dog, which had been so frantic because it understood so well that its little master was making a dreadful mistake—was, indeed, wandering towards a yawning chasm —now found its way down to him by a side path it knew, hoping to lead him back to the top again; but it could make no sense of him. It only whined sadly over a little figure that seemed dead; and then, lifting up its head, it howled a long wild howl, as if finding fault with the black heaven and its cruel snows.

Then, suddenly, with the instinct of a born shepherd's dog, it darted off to its home, which, fortunately, happened

to be very near, scraped furiously at the door, and whined and barked. At the sound the door flew open, and the dog made the mother understand that something had happened. She put a light to her lantern, poor soul, and went out into the terrible night, and the dog led his mistress heedfully to the cliff and down the path to where Teddy lay. And she took him up in her arms and, weeping, carried him home, and the dog followed, and seemed to be weeping too.

And Teddy lay on his little bed unconscious for all that long night; then in the morning he jumped up and said, as if in a dreadful dream, "Is it broke?" and before his mother could answer him, he fell back again unconscious upon his bed.

If only she could have told the brave little man that the bottle was not broken! She bent down her lips to his ears and whispered and spoke it to him, but all in vain. The little features lay still, the eyes and lips were closed and grey as death.

Days passed. He seemed at times to be passing through terrible hours, starting, and muttering, and crying, as he lay with closed eyes.

His father was sitting by his side. He had gently laid his hand on the little brow, and held it lightly there, and the child's eyelids slowly rose, and a feeble smile stole across the pale face, and he took a long breath and said, softly and kindly—

"Father, are you better?" and his eyelids fell again.

"Yes, my grand boy"—thinking only of the little pained face and the faint smile—"yes, my grand boy, I am better."

His heart was in his mouth, and tears, tears of thankful admiration, would start to his eyes.

Then Teddy, in a still lower voice, only a whisper, asked—

"Was the bottle broken, father?"

"No, no, my brave boy. It was the bottle that cured me."

And the father bent over his little man and kissed him.

Then Teddy fell into a quiet sleep, with a smile on his pinched little face, peaceful enough for an angel.

Weeks again passed before they knew all the damage of the fall, for a bone in Teddy's ankle had been broken, and when at length a doctor could be got and the injury was discovered, it was all too late—yes, too late for ever to set it right again, and it grew stiff, and that is why we see him, now a grown man, go limping past our window to-day.

Now, is the horse and the rider the more splendid sight? or do the little mountebanks still seem more glorious than that plain limping man? I am sure they do not. You admire more, far more, that lovely noble little heart. And that limp is the mark it left.

See, then, what is meant by the eyes of our understanding being enlightened. When we first saw him we saw him with the eyes in the sockets of our heads. Now we see him also with the eyes of our understanding.

And so Jesus looks only a wayfaring man, rather sorrowful, and often dust-covered and weary, till we know what it all means. Till then, men call Him a root out of a dry ground, and say He has no form nor comeliness. But then, when the eyes of our understanding are enlightened, and we know what His life means, plain as is His dress, humble as is His lot, He is the sweetest, brightest, grandest glory the world contains.

## Chapter III.

# A BOY OF FLANDERS.

**"Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and [after that] have no more that they can do."—*Luke* xii. 4.**

One day Jesus was urging people not to give up being good whatever came, and He told them not to be frightened of lightnings and storms, and shipwrecks, nor of savage beasts like bears and lions, nor of savage men, nor of anything indeed which could only destroy the body, and, after it had done that, had nothing else that it could do.

The thing to fear was what could damage purity and truth and kindness, and thus destroy both soul and body. Dread that; and fight against that.

And all this was not because Jesus had no sympathy

with fear of bodily harm; for he had himself been made miserable and wretched enough by men who could destroy his body, and threatened to do it, because they wanted to frighten Him from His duty to God. And at length they did kill Him, and got Him out of the way. But Jesus knew that the man who kills our body only drives us out of sight of the fields and homes beneath the blue sky; the man who tempts us to sin and do wickedness kills the soul and drags us out of the Paradise of God, and that is the dreadful thing.

I want to tell you a story of a Flemish boy who was just the man Jesus would like to make us all. He was a small boy, twelve years old at the time, and the child of a widow who needed the little man's earnings to help to keep her home together.

He tended cows along the broad green roadsides which all the summer long were overrun with sweet herbage and flowers; watching them lest they should stray away into the neighbouring corn-fields and crop the growing corn, or munch the springing greens in the gardens; for the country he lived in was without walls, or hedges, or fences, to divide field from road. It consisted of flat breadths of quite open pasture and ploughed lands. So the cattle must stand all the summer through in their dark stalls, or be kept by this little tender boy from eating up the coming harvest.

His home was such as belongs to the very poor of his country, a destitute-looking place, shut up from morning

to night, for both mother and child took their simple meals with them, and were out all day at their work.

But, though they saw little of each other, there was a close tie between them. Their joy was in the simple love of one another, and in the love of truth and right; a love which in the boy had grown with his growth, and become daily more and more himself. What was untrue or wrong or unkind was impossible to him. He loved goodness with all his heart, and it seemed as if in the person of his mother goodness loved him with the same strong love; and the boy smiled and sang and whistled the more sweetly and merrily for it.

One day he was tending his cows among the deep rank grass, where the road ran close by a clump of trees which was an orchard. The orchard, as orchards ought to be, was fenced round with high, close palings. Not that, if there had been no palings, the little cow-herd would have allowed his charge to stray into it, or have been tempted to wander there himself.

How could a boy steal somebody's plums, when the mere thought of such a thing, if it had ever occurred to him, would have cut his very heart like a knife, and turned his whole life and soul into an aching misery? To take the fruit growing there had never occurred to him, any more than to take the tiny drops of honey from the mouths of the bees that droned and buzzed among the sunny flowers. But to-day, just as he was passing the orchard, two frolicsome young gentlemen were passing too.

"Oh! here is the very man," exclaimed one of them as they caught sight of the boy, breast deep in the long grass and bushes. "Look here, my little man. Go through there," he continued, at the same time pointing to a small hole in the orchard fence, through which the boy's small body might just manage to squeeze itself, "and get us some plums. Now, look quick—there's nobody about, and you shall have some for yourself."

But the cow-herd did not move. He smiled a little distressed smile, and slowly shaking his head said, "No, sir."

"You say 'No,' do you? You go, or I'll—" and looking round his eyes rested on a pool of stagnant water close by—"or I'll give you a ducking."

The simple-hearted little fellow, as he looked from the threatening speaker to his big companion, turned a little pale, and looked timid and sick, but he only said, in a still more subdued tone,

"No, sir; I cannot, sir."

He looked as though he hoped they were in fun, but feared they were in earnest.

The young gentleman felt an implied preachment in this little fellow's daring refusal, and he would not stand it. He was angry, and seizing the boy sharply by his shoulder he hurried him to the hole in the fence and said,—

"Now go through there and bring us some plums, or I'll take you to that pond there and I'll duck you; I will, there's no mistake."

The child turned up his pale, sad little face, and stood

speechless with fear. But he did not offer to go through the hole.

The young gentleman took the silence as his answer, and hurried him to the pond and angrily ducked him, and then asked again,

"Now will you?"

When breath came back sufficiently he gasped,

"Oh, sir, I can't."

Before he could draw another breath, before indeed the sentence was well finished, he was thrust under the water again. His tormentor's anger was thoroughly roused:

"I'll show you," said he, "that you can and shall!" For it seemed to him there was nothing but obstinacy in the boy, and perhaps there was as much rough fun in the punishment as there was anger.

As long as the child could speak, he declined to do the wrong, and the young gentlemen were too proud to give up the contest defeated. Unfortunately for them, the boy was delicate, and long before they had any idea of danger, they brought him out of the water too far gone to hear them speak. He was beyond the reach alike of their torture and their questions. The heart had stopped; the little head fell back—he was dead.

Nobody, scarcely even his own mother when she came to know what had happened, suffered such agonies as these two youths endured when they saw the pallor of the face, and feared what they had done. They bent over the child, tenderly breathed into his nostrils, and eagerly used

every expedient they knew to bring back consciousness; they wept; they prayed; they would have given, oh, the world, to have seen those closed little eyelids just lift again. But it was too late.

It was an awful moment for them, and they were full of repentance and shame and sorrow.

And here, for their sake and our own too, let us be glad that this is God's world in which we all live, and that He does not judge any of us by what we have actually done, but only by what we intended to do.

Still, what they intended to do was bad enough, though they only intended to frighten a child into stealing; and let me say, by the way, we are never safe from the mistakes and cruelties of which the world is full, unless we follow the God of love. Kindness and self-denial *never* err.

But it is the boy I want you to see, and his simple, single-hearted love of right. They wanted to drag the little soul out of its Paradise, and they could not do it. They destroyed the body, but, after that, they had nothing more that they could do.

Better is it, my child, to die of a broken heart, or be drowned, than to do wrong. A spirit which feels that, has in it the heaven of Christ, the peace of God. You may never have to choose between right-doing with bodily suffering, and wrong-doing with comfort and ease.

But it is very likely, indeed, it is certain, that you will have to say which you will choose: on the one hand, the

smiles of your companions and wrong-doing, or, on the other, their laughter and scorn and doing right. And when that happens, I beg you, don't be dragged from Paradise. Do right, and remember the little cow-herd boy whose body lay pale and stiff in death on the green grass of that Flanders ditch, and whose little spirit wore a bright crown with God. Or, better still, remember Jesus and his loving earnest plea, "Fear not them which kill the body, but after that have nothing more that they can do; fear him who can destroy both body and soul."

## Chapter IV.

## WORDS MADE FLESH.

**"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory."—** *John* **i. 14.**

You know, of course, what is the difference between the names of things and the things themselves.

For instance, you know the difference between the name (and only the name), "a box of figs," and a box of figs itself—a *real* box and *real* figs. You can think the words

in your mind, can't you? or say them with your tongue for people to hear, or write them on paper, or on a slate so that they can be seen and read; but, after all that, what have you got? Words, words, not figs, not even a bit of the dust off their soft, mealy skins, nor one grit from their sweet seedy hearts.

Words, words, nothing but words.

But now, fancy that we have a box of figs amongst us, which we can touch and prise open, and that we have actually drawn the nails, and are scrambling for a share of the good things in it. Now the name has become things; the words are changed into delicious fruit.

You can understand that.

But we must turn our backs on figs and things to eat, for I want you to understand the difference between "words" and "words made flesh," that you may catch the meaning of one of the brighest, happiest sentences in all the Bible—"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us, and we beheld His glory."

Perhaps you do not think that there is anything in your own common experience which can help you to understand and enjoy such a saying as this. But I think there is. Come, let us see if we cannot find it.

What word shall we choose? Let us say the word canary.

Now fancy you have a friend who often talks to you about a canary. He is so clearly fond of talking about it, and is so undoubtedly joyous in its possession, that you begin to feel, as he talks, that canaries must be enjoyable

things; you feel you should like to have one; you catch fire with your friend's glowing enthusiasm, and when your birthday comes round, and you are asked to choose a present, you at once name a canary. You would like a canary above everything. And your father consents. He loves little live things himself, and loves more to see children learning lessons of care and thought and love. The canary is ordered.

At length the bell rings; he has come; the man is with him at the door. There is a rush to the hall; the door opens. Yes, there he is, all yellow and gold, in a lovely painted cage.

You fill his glass with seed; and look! he is actually eating what you your very self have given him.

He stands on his perch; how knowing he looks!

He sings and sings, as though he would sing his little heart away, looking about, drooping his wings and quivering with delight.

Then he pertly sets his little saucy head on one side to listen to what you are saying, and positively seems to know it all.

Then he flits about among the perches and swings in his ring.

It is quite wonderful. Joy throbs and leaps within you. You dance, and clap your hands, at his bright and lovely ways.

"Canary," that *was* only a word. Now it is a word no longer. The word is made flesh, and dwells among you,

and you behold its glory. Yes, you use John's very word, "glorious!" You shout it; for all dulness has gone out of you; your soul is all alive with delight. And that is what we mean when we say "glorious."

Or imagine the word you have heard your comrades speak, and which you have read about, is "rabbit." You have seen it fondled by children in pictures. As you hear, and read, and look, you perhaps fancy you should dearly like to have rabbits of your own; and at length you have one, each of your family has one—lop-eared and ears pricked up, tiny mites and big ones.

What glorious feelings you would have as you nestled their soft furry cheeks to your own! Then the word would be made flesh and you would see its glory.

But I want you to be very clear in your idea of words and words made flesh; so let us have still other illustrations.

I knew of a boy who had heard about the wild animal of the African deserts, the gazellė; what lovely ways it had, and how it could become the fondest of playmates; until his little heart, itself full of graceful things, was full of love for a gazelle, and great longings to have one for himself.

And the wish was gratified.

An uncle, to whom he had confided it, chanced to have an opportunity of buying a charming little fellow, already tamed, and with the fondling tender ways of a family pet. You can imagine how its new little master felt when he

saw it, and knew that it was for him—his very own. Now fancy them together.

At first the gazelle and the boy stand and look into each other's wondering eyes. It is their hearts that are looking, and they feel at once, "We shall be friends." Then the boy half-timidly clasps the gazelle round the neck with his arms, and the gazelle half-timidly rubs its cheek against his, softly, and bleats. They are growing fast friends. Now he feeds it with bread from his hand, and it eats, and the boys heart almost bursts with joy.

It skips across the lawn, and bounds round, and looks perfectly lovely.

The child's eyes gleam with delight, and he laughs merrily.

Then it follows him into the house, lies with him on the nursery hearth; and the two young, happy souls drink the sweet influences of each other's affections.

Now do you not think that that child's heart knew the difference between words and things? The name, once only a name, heard with his ears, had become a life in his house, a tumult of joy in his heart. In that family the word gazelle had been made flesh, and dwelt among them, and they beheld its glory.

But still better for our purpose is the case of an orphan child. Fancy the eldest girl of a little family who has heard the name "mother," and read it too; but she does not now know one. She hears the word on the happy lips of her school companions, and reads of it in her Bible,

"Lop-eared and ears pricked up; tiny mites and big ones."

comforting sorrow and brightening the days of childhood. She observes that it is a tower of strength to which little folks flee and are safe. It is merciful, long-suffering, and slow to anger. It is a very present help in times of trouble. It is light and gladness. It is all sorts of little useful, nameless heart-riches. But only to others. To her it is a name, only a name, a sorrowful name, that is all; *her* mother is dead.

Years have passed since, gathered around her knee, her little ones felt the sweet charm of the soft voice, the look, the touch we call a mother's. She remembers the night before the death, and the farewell. Long dreary years have passed since then. Nothing fills the void, nothing *can* fill it.

But now suppose that some day, a day when her father seems angry, and the weeping child loses confidence in her management of things, and the children are all cross, and everything goes wrong, that just then heaven should open, and her mother—the old familiar mother—should come back and clasp the bewildered, broken-down girl in her strong, kind arms, looking pity and wiping her tears, and lifting off life's load of cares; that then she gathered all the little folks around her knee, and they all lived again in the sweet light of her dear face; and that she had come to stop with them. What a change it would be! Regrets and sorrows would all be turned into gratitude and delight. The dear word, mother, which had been a word, only a word, and nothing more, would again be

made flesh and dwell among them, and they would behold its glory.

And so, God and His character were once a name. His goodness, His mercy, His patience, His loving ways—these were all revealed in the Old Testament, but only in *word;* God was a dear word. But in Jesus, words are changed into things, we *see* the sweetness of His character and *feel* its charm. The God of Paradise is in fact brought down to earth; "The Word is made flesh and dwells among us, and we behold His glory."

The glory began at Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, in the meekness and lowliness of a little babe. It ended on Calvary, where Jesus died, in the patience and mercy which have made Calvary the hope of the world. And this is the reason why it is all so glorious: "*God* was in Christ."

## Chapter V.

## ON A SINKING SHIP.

"Who loved me, and gave Himself for me."—*Galatians* ii. 20.

All children enjoy stories of adventure and danger in storms at sea. You like the wild triumph of the waves, the fearless struggle of the ship, the heroism of the crew, the daring of the boy who mounts the mast to reef the sail, the coolness of the captain, the hair-breadth escapes, the loss of the boats; the ready wit which contrives and makes

a raft, leaves the ship, and thus beating the storm, brings all safely to land. You call such stories glorious, and say, when they are finished—

"Now tell me another."

Yes, and I will tell you a better; glorious from none of these causes; yet it is glorious, for it stirs our feelings in the grandest way, and does us pleasing and lasting good.

It is the story of a shipwreck, a scene of misery and woe, yet we lose sight of the misery—almost thank God for it—because of the lovely deed to which it inspired one of the sufferers.

A few years ago a sailing ship left Australia for England. One of the passengers was a young man who had recently gone out to Australia for his health, but the place had not suited him; his bad health at once became worse. So he immediately took his passage back, and was now returning.

The ship had made more than half her homeward voyage when she was caught in a storm, which lasted day after day, and night after night, in greatest fury. Winds fell upon her, tore her sails away, and snapped off and blew overboard her masts. Waves leaped upon the deck, tore coverings from over the stairways and ladders leading into the hold and cabins, and poured themselves down in tons of water, until the cook's fires were put out, the berths and cabins were flooded, and all the miserable passengers were driven up to the deck, which, you may imagine, was a scene of danger and confusion. The ship was

now sailless, mastless, and full of water, and rolling helplessly.

All hands worked the pumps, but the water gained on them, and the ship sank deeper and deeper into the sea, and, long before the storm had abated, it became quite clear that it must be abandoned if a single life was to be saved.

So the captain gave orders to launch the boats which had not yet been swept overboard by the sea. These were only two, not half enough for the number of souls on board.

The brave sailors obeyed as best they could, and while the boats were being got ready the captain ordered that lots should be cast as to who should go in the boats.

The people gathered under the shelter of some of the ruins of the masts. It was a deeply solemn time. Only one half at most could be saved; the rest in a few hours, perhaps moments, must be drowned in the swirl of the ship going down; they all stood in the presence of death. Each name was written on a separate slip of paper, then the papers were mixed up in a box; the captain inserted his hand, drew out a name, and read it aloud.

It was a dreadful moment to many of them as one by one they had heard the names read, yet still theirs had not come.

And now, the last is being drawn. The captain lifts it to the flickering light of his lantern and reads. The very

"How many nights more, mamma?"

storm seems silent. The name is read, the suspense is over. All know their fate.

"Range yourselves in line," cried the captain to the fortunate ones, "and move one by one to the boats."

And they filed off as ordered, while the doomed ones gathered in lines on either side to watch them go.

The dark day had settled into darker night; the air was black. The vessel rolled terribly, and the little boats, now lowered to the water, leaped and plunged in the blackness below.

A lantern swung at the point where the men were to leave the ship, to light them down. One by one, the procession disappeared over the gunwale, hung on to the ship's side till the boat was thrown near, and then leaped into it. The young man I mentioned at the beginning of this story was one of the procession, for his name had been among the names drawn. At length, he was the next man to go. As he waited till the man before him had leaped, suddenly his eyes fell upon a pale, wan face close to him. He remembered it, and its story flashed upon him.

He had talked with that man in sunny days, and learnt from him that three years ago, with but a small chance of life, he had left behind him in England his wife, a child, and a child since born; and now, full of health, he was on his way home again. Three years had they been parted, and there that husband and father stood among the doomed. The young man about to leap into the boat

thought of the wife's hopes, the children's bright talk about their father. He could almost hear them say, "How many nights more, mamma?" And, after all, he was to be lost!

He could not bear it.

In an instant, and without a word, he seized the man, forced him over the gunwale, and stepped aside to await death in the man's place. It was the work of a second; there was no chance to demur.

In a few moments more, all was over. The ship had gone down, carrying with it a heart lost to itself, even to the value of life, in the thought of the miseries of a wife and two children in England.

Some glorious deeds move us to clap our hands and shout. This moves us to tears and silence.

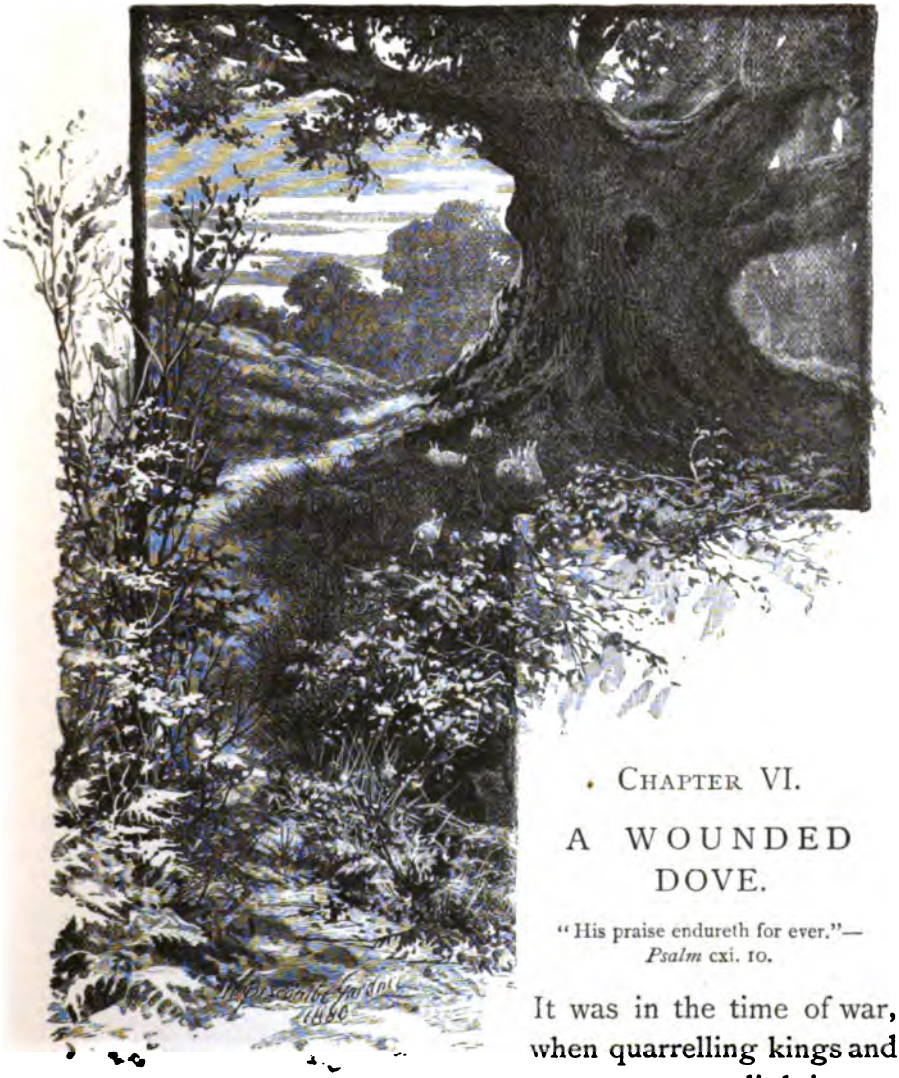
It was the act of the utmost tenderness and beauty. And such a heart is like Christ's. Christ cannot bear to see human misery; He would rather have it Himself.

That brave man, as he went down through the sea, bore away an awful load from hearts in a little home in England. He could not bear that it should be there; he could better bear it on his own heart, and at the price of his life he took it away.

So was it with Jesus in His hour of woe. He could not bear that misery should fall upon us. He could better bear it on His own heart. Sins were bringing misery to us as that shipwreck to that wife and those children. It must not be. His tenderness will not, cannot let it be.

At the price of His life, He will save us. He takes our place and goes down in death.

All lovely deeds and lovely hearts are precious in themselves, but most of all are they precious as they help us to understand the solemn, the sad glory of redemption and the simple cause of it; the infinite tenderness of the heart of Christ.



## Chapter VI.

# A WOUNDED DOVE.

"His praise endureth for ever."—*Psalm* cxi. 10.

It was in the time of war, when quarrelling kings and statesmen were lighting up the country with burning homesteads, and strewing the newly reaped cornfields with dead men.

Near the place of my story was an ancient castle with grey frowning towers and lofty battlements, rising above a hill of trees. And a hundred soldiers were in it, awaiting orders to march and join in the slaughter. From time to time some of them stood in the gateway or mounted a tower and gazed up into the sky, as if looking at the clouds spreading their white beauty against the blue. Yet it could not be so, for they went away again as though they had seen nothing; the clouds were not what they wanted. And they loitered about in the great courtyard, restless, and perplexed, and sad. Yet it was a lovely sky they kept looking into.

The road from the castle sloped down through lovely greenery till it reached the valley below, when it followed a little river which could be seen from the castle tower, winding like a thread of silver away through park-like lands and wandering away out of sight to open rougher pastures, divided by stone walls, and here sheep were grazing in care of a boy.

Though less brilliant than the scene in the castle courtyard, these woolly-coated sheep and the boy in his neatly darned clothes were more beautiful. The sheep grazed in calm, sunny fields, peaceful and contented. The boy leaned against the slope of a bank, and with two bright eyes looked out of a round healthy face upon the long stalks of the seeding grass gently waving in the wind. He wore the humblest clothes, and carried a little round waterbottle slung at his side. Yet his life was quite as beautiful as the

beautiful sights around him, for he was as kindly and industrious as boy could be. The serving-men at the castle were all gay in soldiers' best, yet were they sad at heart. Some days before, their general with his troops had gone out to find the enemy to fight them and then send word to the soldiers, awaiting word at the castle, where they must march to be of the greatest service, and thus drive the enemy out of the land and win victory. He had taken with him in a basket one of the castle pigeons, which at the proper time he would release with his message in a little packet tied at its throat. The pigeon was of the sort which would be sure to find its way back to the castle, and thus bring the message of the general to the duke and his soldiers there.

But the proper time has passed and the dove has not returned, and the duke and his soldiers are full of anxiety and pain.

They are restless! Shall they not go?

But where?

How they wish the dove would come. And that is the reason why first one and then another searches the sky for the sight of it. That little spot in it would be just now far more precious to them than the sight of the pretty clouds or even the sun. But they strain their shaded eager eyes in vain.

While they gaze and gaze, away yonder in the far-off pasture the shepherd-boy is startled. Something has fluttered and fallen through the air, and it is lying over there

on the ground. What can it be? He rises and goes to where it fell to see a dove panting, bleeding, and exhausted.

A little heap of ruffled feathers, two feebly spread wings, and a bruised head. It was a pretty dove, dying. He bent pitifully over it, lifted it with tenderest grace, replaced its pearly wings and tumbled feathers, held up its cold quivering body in his warm hands, fondling it against his cheek, moistened its parted beak with spittle from his mouth, while it looked as a wounded dove alone can look. And he felt those noble kindly feelings of a heart which are enough to make boys, as we say, happy as a king, little thinking how wretched and unhappy kings can be.

The bleeding thing had left the general's camp in the cool morning fresh and strong of heart, all trim, without a spot on its silver wings, admired for its beauty, and blessed with "God speed" as it rose into the air with the message at its throat on which the safety of a kingdom might rest. But the enemy's soldiers had shot at it, grazed the sinew of its wing, and hurt it. Still, bleeding it plodded on, on its homeward way, till loss of blood and the heat of the burning sun and the pain of movement made it giddy and faint, and in spite of all its brave efforts to continue, it fell through the air on to the ground near where the little shepherd was.

"You dear," he lovingly said almost a dozen times, kissing it as though it were a child. What should he do with this beautiful dove?

Happily for him, he had not a selfish heart, so in spite of

"And what is this little packet hanging at its throat?"

his joy in the treasure, it never occurred to him to keep it. Of course it was not his. Some might have said, "What of that? he had found it. And there was nobody there to see."

But though it would have been of such delight to him to have had a dove of his own—how he would feed it and love it! yet his first thought was, "It belongs to somebody."

Hard, cruel hearts would have said, "Kill it; take it home and put it in a pie; it is as good as dead." But such a thought would have simply made the shepherd-boy sick.

"It's no business of yours," others would have said. "If it is not yours, let them look after it whom it belongs to. What's the use of your bothering?"

Other natures might have just put it out of its misery, kicked it into the ditch, and walked on.

But all the little beautiful things he did, and all brave thoughts that he had, came to him because he was a kind, honest soul. And, as the Bible teaches us, such a soul somehow finds its way to truth. The sincere question, "Whose can it be?" as he made the tender, tumbled body as comfortable as a shepherd-boy knew how, was soon answered by "It will be a castle dove! What can it be doing here, hurt and miles away? And what is this little packet hanging at its throat?"

In a few moments the boy was off at his quickest speed to see whether his guess was right. Of the anxieties of the

General on the battlefield, of the Duke at the castle, and of the great stake his country had in the dove getting speedily to its home, he knew nothing; but had he known all he could not have done a wiser thing. Goodness is of God, and a good boy's steps, like a good man's, are all ordered of the Lord; and he always does the best thing for himself and for everybody else. To do right, be intensely good, forget everything in the desire to do what is pure, unselfish, kind, and true, that is all the wisdom you need to guide you aright; you need nothing more. It is the very spirit of God. Its wisdom never fails.

Away went the simple shepherd-boy, following alone a simple boyish sense of kindness and duty, carrying the limp, languid little limbs off to the distant castle to ask, "Is this yours?"

At length he arrived at the great castle gate and pulled the bell. The instant the gate opened, without one word to the boy, the keeper wildly seized the dove, rushed into the courtyard, slamming the gate in the boy's face as he did so, and frantically shouted,

"It's here! I've got it!"

Instantly the lucky man was ushered into the presence of the Duke, and told some excited tale of how he had seen it just reaching the gate and had saved it from a dog. To tell the truth, he scarcely knew how he had got it, whether from the hands of man, woman, or child. The Duke soon made out the message; the soldiers rushed to their spears and horses, and in an hour a procession of armed men, with

banners and trumpets, left the castle for the fight, where the pigeon's little letter had said it was to be.

When the gate had slammed to, the little shepherd had turned round and gone quickly back to his sheep, a little pained at the rough handling of the wounded dove, but glad that he had taken it there, for it seemed to have been wanted, and the feelings of his heart within him as he went away were what the Bible calls "The praises of God," blessings which God has hid inside the doing of what is noble and right, as he has hid flowers in the root of the rose. That is all God gives people; but that is more, far more than enough.

But inside the castle gate, the old keeper was getting a great deal besides. The Duke had given him gold pieces, and raised his rank among his servants. His comrades clapped him on the back, cheered him, and congratulated him on his lucky find, and he was quite a great man; and they all ate and drank and were merry.

"Good day," said a neighbour to the whistling shepherd-boy as he returned.

"Good day," said the boy, and then he began to whistle again.

He met a gleaner or two going with their gleanings from the reaped fields, and here and there an odd labourer, and they passed with pleasant words.

And the boy explained at night to his master that he had left the field, but was not away longer than he could help. He had carried a dove of the Duke's up to the castle.

"A procession of armed men with banners and trumpets."

E.2

In a few days the battle had been fought. It was a victory; the enemy were driven out of the land, and peace was restored, and there was mirth everywhere. And the simple folks gossipped about how it was a little pigeon that brought the news to the Duke. And the farmer heard and said, "Ah! that's what my shepherd-boy took up." And the labourers said, "Yes, we met him coming away," and the gleaners said, "And so did we. It was the day the soldiers went," they said. And it came to the Duke's ears, and he remembered the tale of the gatekeeper and could not understand. "How can it be?" he said; and the Duke sent for the boy; could his tale be true?

And the boy came, and the gatekeeper opened the gate to him.

And, oh, what would he give if he might slam that gate in the boy's face again! For with the sight of that boy's face came back to him all the lie that he had told, and the higher wages he had got, and the gold pieces, and the honours, and the mirth—all came, and he was sick and his old limbs trembled under him. Poor gatekeeper! his hour had come. And the boy was led in to the Duke. He had little to say, only how he had found the dove.

You may imagine how glad all the castle people were that the boy was righted, and what contempt they all felt for the man who had taken the Duke's gold and their clappings and cheers. And what, think you, did the poor old story-teller feel? What would he have given to be able to hide his poor silly old head!

Perhaps you may say, "But he had had his clappings, and his beer, and his gold pieces; he had enjoyed the mirth, and spent the money, and eaten the things." But do you not see how, in spite of that, he had lost them all again. When men do wrong, whatever they get by it, they are sure to lose —they must lose it. That is what the Bible means when it says, "From him that hath not shall be taken away even that he hath." God never accounts that a man has what is not fairly his. The old man was wretched.

The praises of the castle yard endured but a little while. The quiet praises of God which sing within a good and honest heart, they alone "endure FOR EVER."

We are immortal, my child; so to do wrong is a very silly thing. God is over us, too—a good and righteous God, who, out of love to us, cannot endure iniquity; so it is a wretched thing too. It brings nothing—nothing but misery. Only goodness, goodness, goodness is it that has joy which is not a brief and passing joy. ITS pleasures are for evermore.

## Chapter VII.

## A BLOW ON THE FACE.

"They struck Him on the face."—*Luke* xxii. 64.

The gospel shows us the loving, gentle figure of Jesus, condemned to be put to death and be buried soon, standing in the midst of a group of cruel, shameless cowards, who are making fun of His sufferings, and adding small insults to His broken heart. One strikes Him in the face.

As I read these last words I feel my cheeks burn with shame, my throat chokes with a sob that there were ever

found hands like mine to strike a face like His; and if the sight of that worn figure beneath that blow did not teach us something priceless to learn, I would rather close the page where it is written, and neither read nor speak of it any more. It is so sad, so disgraceful to man, that I would try to forget it. But in spite of all its pain to me, I cannot do so. It is an open door into heaven for us; for all the while we see the shameful sight of Jesus at that wretched time, we see the Spirit, the glorious Spirit of the Great Unseen God, who, through all the years of the world's history, has been bearing with the sins of man.

While we gaze on Jesus we behold those solemn words, "Long suffering and slow to anger," made flesh and dwelling amongst those very men. The name which God gave as the name of Himself to Moses is there seen; we see its *glory*, and it becomes sacred with a sacredness which never can belong to words. Jesus had shown it in His life; and now in all the scenes of his putting to death, He does the same. He is, in them all, adding an awful loveliness to the name of Him who sits upon the throne of heaven and earth, who is God over all.

The perfectness of God's patience is revealed by this minute insult added to greater wrongs. This little pain is one more, when already pain has brought sweat of blood to His brow. That aching brow those coarse men slapped. I hear the sound of the blow; it hurts me, my heart thrills with pain. I am glad that I was not there.

I think Jesus, too, must have been glad that none of His

disciples were there. Even gentle John must have rushed on the cruel man that did it, and surely Peter's hand would have been at his sword. But Jesus endured. He came to reveal the utterly perfect patience of God: patience to the uttermost.

I cannot tell you how wonderfully this small thing in Jesus' great sorrow inspires me with hope in God.

Let me relate to you a story to help you at least to begin to see the tender beauty in this child of the Most High.

You may look at it for years—all your life long—and never see it. I want to open your eyes to it now; for when once you do see it, you will fall at His feet and worship Him. I only say "to begin" to see it; for we must live for ever to know much about the Grand Heart that is beating in Him whose love and goodness this wicked world so turned to sorrow.

It was a long time ago, before Jesus was born, and it was in Rome, in a great day of trouble. The people, generally so strong and gay and full of life, were sad and afraid; for a wild, savage king was leading an army against their city. He had just fought and beaten their own army, and in a few hours would be all through their streets and houses, killing them: killing unoffending men, tender women, and boys and girls, and even merry babies and children; for soldiers think nothing of killing people who have never done them any wrong; they get their living by it. It is a cowardly, cruel business.

And soldiers were coming to them, and a horrible fear

seized upon them all, and they left their houses, and hurried off as fast as they could to the strongest place in the city. It had high walls and strong gates, and they shut themselves inside it, and hoped to postpone their death, at least for a day or two.

All but eighty people!—eighty aged, wrinkled, venerable men. These stopped to meet the savage soldiers, and to save the rest of the Romans, if they could.

Thousands of soldiers were coming—young, strong, and full of life—and eighty bent and aged men stood there to meet them. Every hand of the enemy brandished a sword, but these men had not a weapon amongst them; for the fact is, these old men were not going to fight, they were only going to die.

They were very sad with the memories of what they had done. They were the rulers of Rome, and it was they who had maddened the wild king, who was now coming with his army against the city to kill it. And they said to themselves, "It is we who have done this, and he knows it. Perhaps if we are found and killed, he may let all the other people live."

These old men were called senators, because they were the rulers of the city, and had great power, and made war—which in this case had ended in defeat: to whom everybody gladly looked up, of whom the people were proud. Wise, majestic men they were, with a grand sense of justice and of the high duty of a Roman.

"Perhaps if the insulted savages kill us they will be

satisfied, and kill no more. Shall we not try?" they said.

It was a good and right thing to do, and they all agreed. It would be well if rulers always did the same.

So they dressed themselves up in their beautiful rulers' robes, all purple and white, that they might announce themselves who they were—the very men with whom the wild king was angry, and who had done him the wrong. Then they brought out from their places the costly ivory chairs which were the thrones of the rulers, and arranged them in a wide, open square called the market-place, in a long row, because the soldiers would be sure to come there, and they would at once be seen. And they took their ivory staffs in their hands, the signs of their authority, and then seated themselves—their heads bent, their long, beautiful beards lying deep over their splendid robes—on their ivory chairs. Can you not picture them as they sat there—aged, wrinkled, venerable, their strong faces lighted up by their great purpose?

On came the hordes of savages with furious noise, knives uplifted in every hand and brandished in the air. They pushed through the gates with hoarse shouts of triumph.

But where were the people? The streets were silent, the houses empty.

Away they rushed in all directions, seeking to destroy. At length some of them reached the great square.

And there, with one accord, they stopped, fascinated, amazed. They stood and stared at the sight. An empty

market-place could not have been more silent; yet there, across the square, sat a row of figures, majestic, motionless!

What were they?

Nothing moved. They were touched and bewildered and half afraid, savages though they were.

Were these kings of Rome? or were they the gods? What were they? Where had fate brought them? Had they found a new world? they asked, as they stood that long moment, breathless and perplexed, right opposite that wonderful row there, all grandly clad in their best.

At length one, more inquisitive than the rest, stole towards the wonder, stood within reach of one of them, bent forward, stretched out his arm cautiously, put out his finger, touched him on the cheek, poked him, and, encouraged by the feeling of only flesh, plucked a hair out of the venerable senator's beard, saying, "They are only men," and laughing right out, a cruel, jeering laugh.

Now the old senator, who had been quite calm at the prospect of death, who had seen the uplifted daggers and hordes of advancing savages without the tremble of a nerve, was roused. He could not stand that. He could defy death and brave the smart of knives, and breathe not a murmur. But these small insults, this vulgar familiarity, this vile fellow plucking hair off his cheek, that was beyond him.

He was still a ruler of civilised people, a senator, a Roman, and just then at his grandest; for was he not self-devoted to die? And to be handled now like that, by a

barbarous hireling! it passed human power to endure it. Instantly he forgot all his benevolent designs for the people. Rome might be redeemed too dearly. He forgot all in the memory of who and what he was.

Instantly he thrust the rude hand sharply from him, sprang to his feet, and, half blind with rage, dealt a blow with his staff which felled the offender to the ground.

The heavens might fall and the earth perish, but that fellow should suffer.

The spell was broken; hoarse cries filled the air, hordes of savages rushed across the square as one man, fell upon the senators with their swords, and dispatched them all. In a few moments they lay in their own blood upon the ground, every man a corpse.

Alas! their blood was shed; but as for appeasing their foes and propitiating their wrath, it had only made them more furious and in a savager mood. And Rome now lay at their feet.

How the story ended I will not tell you, for that is not what I want you to see. What I want you to see is, that men may be willing to die who are not willing to be insulted. Great things cannot measure our endurance. There is enough in *them* to feed and sustain our pride. A man may be grand and calm in great sufferings who is fiery and fussy in little ones.

Such was that Roman senator. Anything else, anything but that! He could not stand that. It was something grand to be a victim, a sacrifice, to lay down his life; that,

dignity permitted; but to have a hair plucked from his beard, a finger poked at his face, with a light, laughing sneer! that; never! Brave men go the length of dying, but only cowards will stand an insult. So says the world.

How different the spirit of Jesus! "He withheld not His cheek from them that plucked off the hair." Suppose that He had said, "I am master of the winds, Lord of life and of death, Prince of the angels, the Son of God, the King of glory, at whose feet all heaven bows in adoration; and I am the judge of all this earth; I will not stand being slapped on the face." Had He been proud, He *would* have said so; but He had no pride. He forgot everything—His power and dominion and all. He forgot Himself, and remembered only His love and the love of God, which He longed to show. And because He wanted to teach us God, He stood and was slapped on the face, slapped too by a dirty and ignorant and coarse man, who doubtless thought himself very clever to strike a sufferer, and such a sufferer!

Such was the patience of Jesus.

The patience of man, at its best, is only like a small pretty bubble floating in the air, so soon to burst. But the patience of Jesus is immense, and lasting as the sky.

Look at this picture, dear children, I know no language that can tell you such glorious tidings about God; for tongues cannot do what this picture can. Look at it. There is the Spirit of the Lord of all power and might, clothed as a peasant, arrested as a criminal, treated as a vagabond, face to face with a low and shameless coward,

and that coward strikes him! Then listen, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself."

I tremble for a moment; the sight hurts me. That patience was the act of God! Thunder was never more terrible. Soft whispers of love were never, never so sweet. As I gaze, the name of God fills with awful beauty; His great power seems altogether too gentle; His exalted dignity grows unutterably humble and lowly; and, as a suppliant, He seems to beseech me.

At the sight, I fall on my face and weep and worship. Look, my little children, till you bend before the beautiful sight, till you with your heart kiss those two wayfaring feet; and stretching out your arms to him, you cry, "O God, I will sin no more." It is thus God gains His empire over you, and you, even on earth, solemnly, joyfully enter the kingdom of heaven.

## Chapter VIII.

## GLORY AND HONOUR.

**"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour."—*Hebrews* ii. 9.**

I WANT to speak to you about glory and honour, and my text shall be these words—"Jesus, who for the suffering of death was crowned with glory and honour."

It is the most natural and beautiful thing that it should be so, for it is the free, joyous, and spontaneous homage of the God of heaven to the great, the grand, the simple goodness of Jesus. Now I want you to understand that this crown of Jesus is no glittering gilt rim; this glory is no glare and splendour of a palace, and the honour is no mere courtliness of courtiers and subordinates, or pomp of

heavenly state. The great break into cries of praise to Him because He is greater; the grand, because He has done more grandly than they all.

Now come with me and let us understand what divine glory and honour is. Come with me to a great hall in London. It is the anniversary of Homes and Refuges for Boys, most of whom have been rescued from neglect and misery. Sweeping circles of seats rise on the platform one above another, all full of boys. Before the platform is the hall, crossed by multitudes of benches, all filled, crowded with people. In the centre of the great circles of the boys yonder, and right in front of the platform, is a little table; behind the table is a chair, and in it sits a peer of the realm.

My story begins at the moment when the prizes are given.

Now fancy the scene. The Earl rises. The table is piled up with articles, and certain boys approach one by one.

First comes the winner of the prize for punctuality. Every boy behind had had his chance at it, and there stands the boy that has won it. He takes an accordion away, and goes back to his seat, while cheers rise from every quarter of the hall, but chiefly from the five hundred throats and five hundred pairs of clapping hands of his young vanquished competitors. You could scarcely believe it possible that anything awaited other boys to be compared in triumphant joy with this.

Then comes the prize for writing. Its winner advances to the front and receives it. At this all the little fellows

there who had themselves been leaning over their desks, sitting on their bare board forms, with their pens in their hands, dipping them in ink-pots just above, and their two eager eyes fixed on the work between the lines in their copybooks, steadily making it true to the copy there—yes, all of them, with one accord, break out afresh in a glorious uproar, and the boy that has beaten them all carries off a desk.

Next comes the thrift prize, for the boy who has spent the least of his pocket-money, and saved the most in his box. His thrift might have been the act of self-denial; but I fear it must have had in it some element of meanness, for the cheers have lost a little of their swing, though he is cheered well.

Others come, and as each carries off his prize, hands and voices fall to clapping and shouting, and hearts seem to bound and sing.

Then the last boy comes. Suddenly all the joy goes out of the place, as light goes when the gas is put out; and there is dead silence. To everybody it seems as if something was going to happen. The whole place becomes almost breathless. What is the matter? What we see is a little figure standing at one end of the table, evidently timid, and screwing up his courage, for he is very pale, and has put out his fingers on to the edge of the table, as it would seem to steady himself.

The Earl says, "I have now the honour——," and he pauses, and draws himself up, as if making room for a great

swell of feeling. At the same time he is lifting something up from the table almost reverently. It is a little box.

He opens it, and takes into his hand a small round medal. The audience at each second of this proceeding becomes stiller, with almost distressing suspense; and, to catch every word that is to be spoken, it becomes stillness itself.

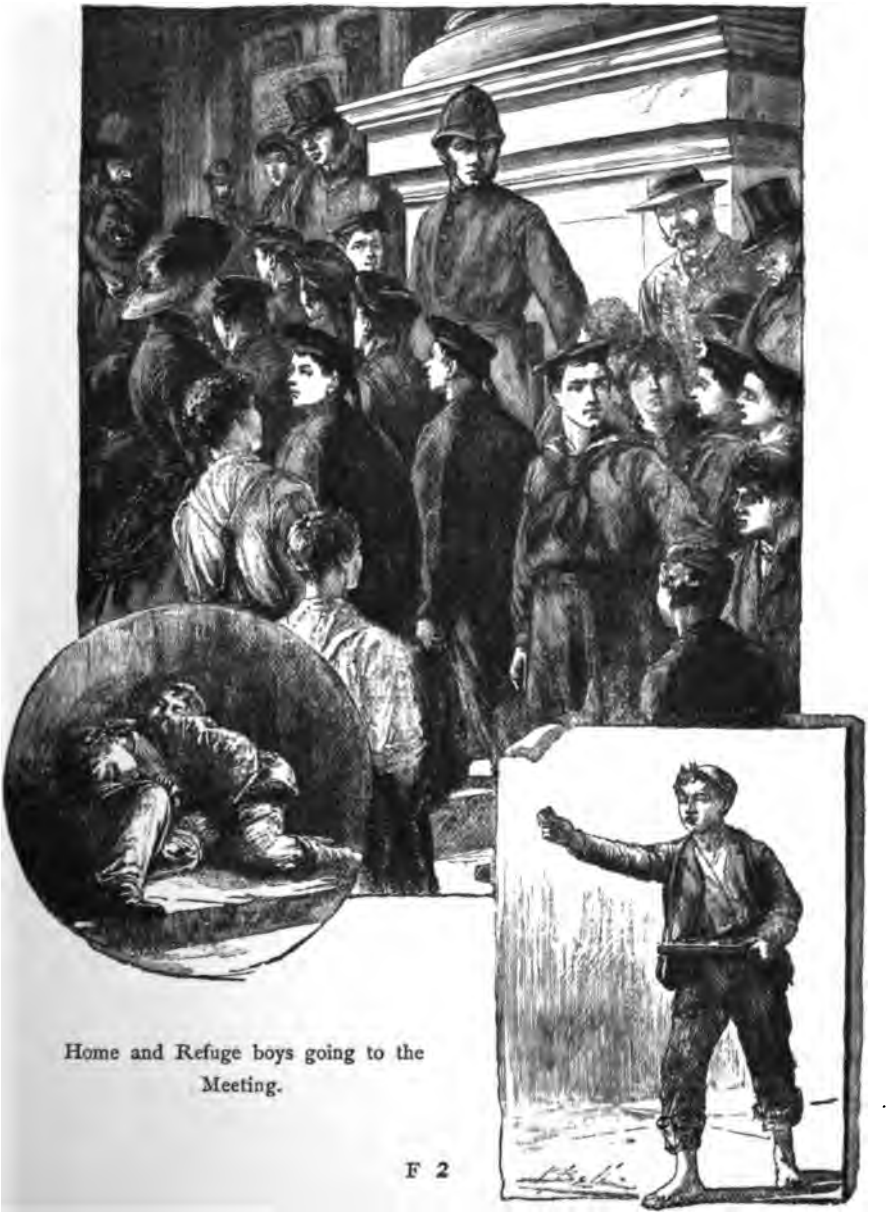
The Earl continues in a subdued tone, "This boy has saved life!——"

That boy? A something goes right through the place. The audience can restrain itself no longer. It breaks out in tumultuous cheers again and again, with hands and feet and voice. Handkerchiefs are waved, and hundreds of strong men are in tears.

Meanwhile, the Earl is pinning a medal on the child's jacket, and the child himself is lifting the hand he had put out to the table, and drawing the back of it across his eyes. He could save life, it seemed, but he could not stand praise, and he quietly proceeded to sidle away.

But his comrades behind the chair cannot allow that. They give great cries of "hurrah!" which quiver with feelings that had been in no shouts before, standing on their seats, and looking over one another's heads. And the boys who had won the writing-desk and accordion, now in the front row, as he goes by, put writing-desk and accordion down and generously clap him on the back. *He* has undoubtedly done better than they all.

Now in this tribute to this boy above all, those lads felt something of the grand sacred feeling with which all heaven



Home and Refuge boys going to the Meeting.

casts down its crowns, and shouts the supreme triumphant glory of Jesus; for that boy had in him some of the glory of God, which all creatures were made to do homage to, the glory which is the special glory of the Saviour of the world. And that vast assembly, so deeply stirred at the sight of the little fellow and the memory of his simple, natural, and beautiful deed, also felt some of the same.

And who were we, the multitude, in that moment of awe, and joy, and tears?

On our way there, some of us had met coming down the street a carriage drawn by beautiful horses with stately tread, champing their bits and tossing their noble heads, as though they counted it an honour to be harnessed to such a vehicle, and in such harness too—polished black, with sparkling and glittering ornaments; and behind them a driver stiffened and starched up to the highest pitch of dignity, in choicest velvet of crimson and white, bowed and embroidered with gold, with a veritable Napoleon hat and black cockade fluttering in the wind. The coach itself was a sumptuous affair, with carved wreaths and sculptured shields, fretted with crimson and gold. Behind it stood two liveried servants, with powdered wigs and pompous hats. And inside sat a splendid gentlemen, as splendid as rich apparel could make him. And as the glittering sight slipped noislessly by along the softly paved streets, men stopped and stood upon the footpath, and said, "The Lord Mayor!" admiring most, I think, those natural, noble brutes in their gilded harness.

That was glory and honour, pretty enough in its way, and it gave a certain kind of joy, and won a certain kind of homage. But what was it to the sight of that little jacketed lad there by the table?

At one we stared; at the other we gazed. At the murmur, "The Lord Mayor," we were arrested. At the words, "He has saved life!" we cried out with a great tear-dripping cry. Every heart swelled, every soul saw lights; the whole house was full of his glory. Now here are two kinds of glory; worldly glory and heavenly. Judge, my boys, judge in yourselves, for which of these kinds of glory God made us? Which satisfies us most deeply? Which does all that is within us rise to honour with our holiest honour?

And look at the noble chairman; he himself had driven down from his proper place in the House of dukes, and earls, and lords, where were gathered the men who had done well as lawyers, and judges, and statesmen, and warriors, and the princes of the royal blood. Yet, all peer though he was, he was moved to the sincerest depths of his being as he murmured, "I have the honour," and pinned the life-saving medal on the child's jacket. His heart was full. He paused to swallow down something that would rise in his throat before he could go on.

There is the "Glory and Honour" of successful statesmen, and warriors, and lawyers, but the glory of self-forgetful saving of life is a glory that excelleth, and that was the wondrous glory won by this boy. He had plunged into the

stream, shared for a moment a drowning man's risk, and that little hand—look at it there, steadying him by holding that table—had come out holding the saved.

And why has self-forgetfulness such mighty power? Why can a twelve-year-old child bow down an audience of grown men before him, and give to that brow with its stubbly crown of shorn black hair glory and honour more than the lustre of gold and jewels? Why is it that that small body in its little breeches and jacket, brushing away a tear from its cheek, grips three thousand hearts, and holds them all, and makes them, in short, loyal members of his kingdom? Why is it so? It is so because God is like him. He has a bit of the same beauty we were all made on purpose to worship; the glory before which angels give a great cry, and all the company of heaven fall down and adore, and adore, and adore!

Now, my children, see that sight as a peep into heaven; and, one thing more, see in what it is that heaven and earth in a very deep sense are both alike.

Had that brave young heart in the struggle with the man, had it gone down; had there been a little swirl on the surface of the river, a few tiny bubbles rising and bursting; had the little struggler, too brave for his strength, landed not on the bank of the Thames, but on the strand of the eternal world—had death been his reward, would he have landed in silence? Would the little stranger whom we all cheered with delightful tears in our eyes have arrived there without a cheer?

If so, I, for one, would not care to go there?

But I know it could not have been so. It is quite impossible; because he had some of the mind which was in Christ Jesus in him; and if angels' hearts could be faithless to his "little" struggle, they could not have honoured Christ's greater one. He would have missed the cheers in Exeter Hall; but, for certain, he would have heard the bounding music of ten thousand children-angels before the throne of God in heaven, and have received the crown of "Well done!" from God Himself.

And what would he have done with such a crown? Just what the writing-desk boy and accordion boy did with their rewards; he would have put it down to crown Jesus. The child that can die of self-forgetful love must be humbled to the very dust at the sight of the supreme grandeur of the love of Jesus, and honour it with triumphant joy. He is the beautiful above all.

Heaven, my dear children, is an assembly of kings—kings crowned as that dear, gasping, dripping-jacketed lad, standing on the river's bank, with the radiant crown of a self-forgetful love; and Jesus is the King of the kings.

Now do you understand, my children, why in the assembly of God and the angels, Jesus, for the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and honour?

Gaze on Jesus. He is, in a measure, in every pure and lovely and lovable deed; but His perfect fulness is only seen in the Gospels.

And follow Him: in nursery, playground, and business,

with friends, strangers, enemies. In his self-forgetting spirit do all you have to do, own all you have to own. And, suffering with Him, you shall reign with Him. Forgetting yourself, you shall wear His crown here as he wore it here: only boys and girls to the world—and silly ones, too, to many in it—but as for God, the good and goodness-loving God—you will be KINGS unto God.

# CHAPTER IX.

# LOVE IN ITS ANGER.

**"For His anger endureth but a moment. . . . His mercy endureth for ever."—** ***Psalms*** **xxx. 5 and cxxxvi. 1.**

You cannot too often think of the solemn, the glorious truth that God never ceases to love, even the wickedest of us all; and perhaps you have thought enough about this strangely glorious truth to be surprised, indeed a little puzzled, because the Bible contains many angry, terrible words which are the words of God.

You cannot understand.

"How can God be loving people and yet speak to them like that?" you sometimes say.

Strange as it may sound, still it is true: God is love,

and far more truly is He love than if He had never spoken those angry words. There is no halo around His brow more gloriously loving, and when it shall have done what it is there to do, men will add, more gloriously *lovely*, than the darkness of His gathering anger.

So does God love us that if we were always good and blessed He would be always happy in us, and His face and voice would never have any other look and sound than brightness and joy; but one thing spoils it all. He see what harm sin can do us; how miserable and wretched it can make us; and we are so often sinning. It is that which kindles his kind heart with pain. He wants to keep us back from sin because it leads us on to misery. So He pleads and warns; and when men will do the sin and will go on to the misery, He speaks out of a pained heart, and is angry.

But do not suppose that with all sins and every sinner alike God is indiscriminately angry. By putting us into families God has taught us that there are sins *and* sins: sins which are trifling little naughtinesses, and likely, in a healthy home, to be outgrown by mere increase of the little sinner's sense and love; sins that are more serious and deeply grieving, needing to be firmly, lovingly corrected and checked; and sins of a more serious sort still, which arouse love's pain and anger; and, of all the sins of this last kind, those which risk the children's health and limbs and, *above all*, their lives, arouse the most alarm and hear the most angry words.

Now, what is God? God is our real Father; and as in the families of man, so is it in His family, there are sins and sins; sins which are simply dreadful to Him, what the Bible calls sins "unto *death*," and which arouse His strongest feeling and His most terrible words; and sins which are "not unto death," which, though they do grieve Him, do not provoke His anger. For this is the will of your Father, that not one of His little ones should perish. And, just because God has the feelings of a real Father, those serious sorts of sins which risk trust and love—to Him, His children's life—arouse love's deepest anguish and terrible anger.

And where is the surprise?

What would you think of a boy whose naughtiness took the form of striking matches in a tent he had made for himself and his little brother by sitting up under his bedclothes—as I have heard of one doing? It is simply dreadful to think of what might have happened. The wonder is that the bedclothes did not catch fire, that the little fellows were not burnt to death!

And what, too, would you have thought of a mother who, when she found out the performance, smiled? Thought! you do not think at all; for you know such a mother does not exist. It would be impossible for any mother to imagine such a dreadful risk without terrible anguish and anger.

You know that where wrong goes on, love cannot be for ever smiling. And what we know of the love of our

parent on earth we know of the love of our greater parent in heaven. Least of all those kind hearts that own and prize you can the heart of God see you risking soul-injury, suffering, and death, without terrible anxieties and anger. If at such times God were not angry, if He only smiled, then His heart would be a heart of stone and not a heart of flesh.

God's anger even in its very loudest tones is all love.

It is like the bell I have read of, which rang to the roll of the waves breaking over the top of a sunken rock at sea, on which at night, but for the warning sound, the sailor might strike his ship and lose his life.

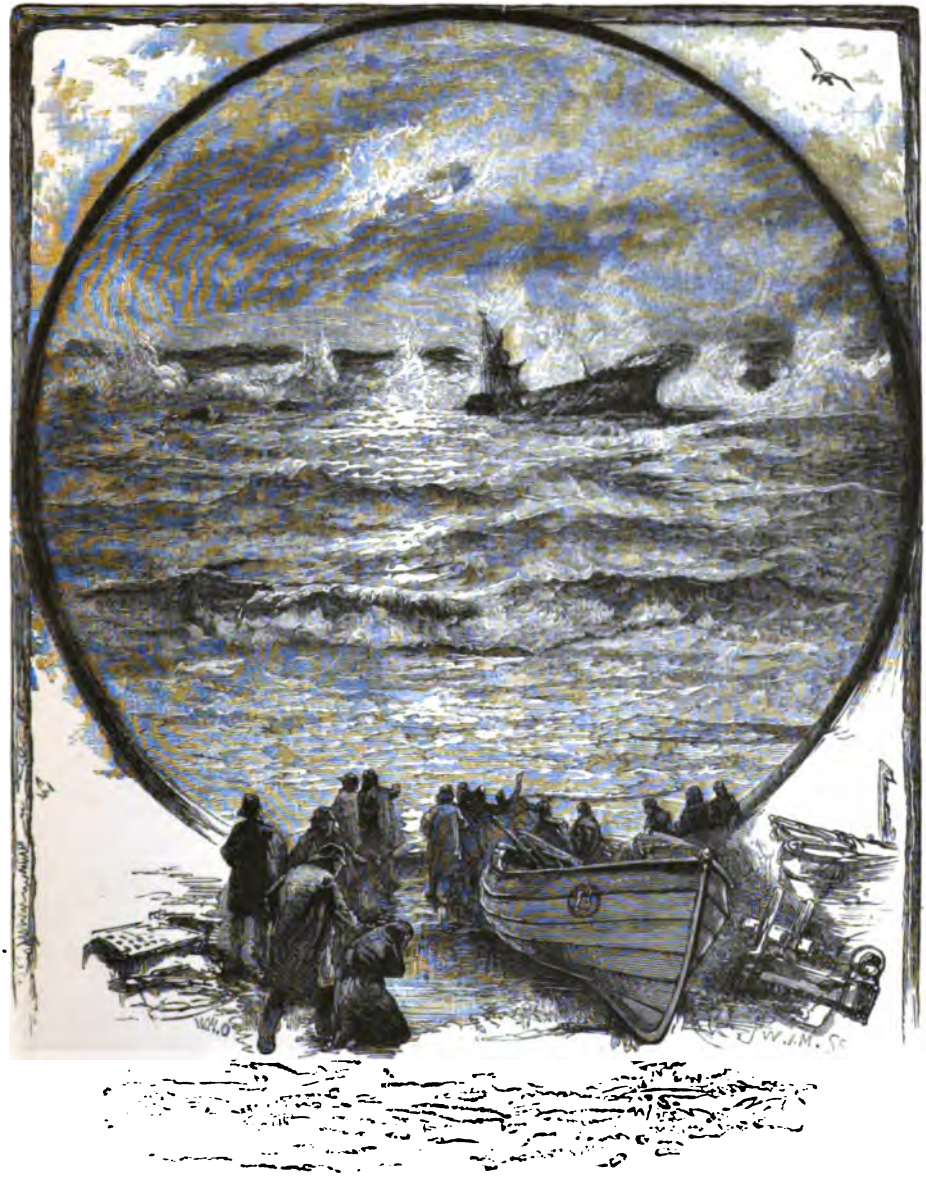
The bell was put up because many a noble ship had wrecked itself there and spread its cargoes on the waves for sea-birds' food and drowned its seamen. And but for the bell, the seaman knew that this would all happen again, and he would never reach wife and home.

He cannot see where he is going, but the bell makes him *hear* where he is going. When his ship is safe and far away, he hears no bell at all.

The nearer and nearer his ship approaches the rock, the louder and louder sounds the warning.

The farther and farther he sails away, the softer and fainter the sounds become; and if he never goes near the sunken rock at all, and there is no danger to him at all, neither does he hear even the faintest sound from the warning bell.

When the sailor hears it, his face turns pale, his heart



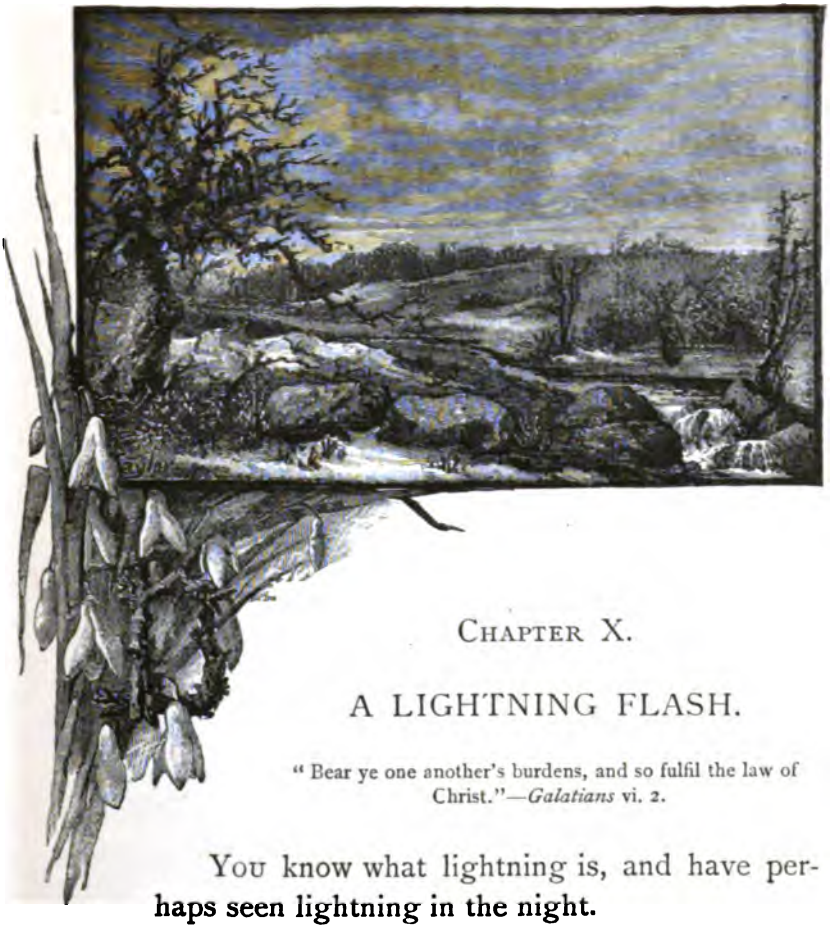
"Many a noble ship had wrecked itself there."

sickens, and his limbs tremble under him. But do you not see how that bell tells that somebody *cares* for the sailor? Its most angry clang is the voice of kind and thoughtful love.

And "your Heavenly Father careth for *you*."

That is the reason why He sometimes speaks in anger. God's anger is but His clanging bell upon a sunken rock! So, my young child of God, give heed to God's anger and thank Him for it.

Whenever it is roused it means "danger," and at its loudest thunder it but means "greatest danger," danger of injury to His child and pain to Himself: for He loves too well, to see harm come to His children, even when it is by their own folly, without its coming to Him too. His wrath is agony pleading against all and everything which would do even the least of His little ones harm.



## Chapter X.

## A LIGHTNING FLASH.

"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."—*Galatians* vi. 2.

You know what lightning is, and have perhaps seen lightning in the night.

You have looked out of your window, when all was blackness and darkness outside and not a thing could be seen, because you were expecting to see another flash. You were possibly by the shore, and you suddenly saw the sea with its rolling waves, and a boat with a mast riding at anchor not far away, and a ship with all sails set out at

sea, and the sky and the big clouds; you saw all just as if it were day. Or you had looked on the country, and there was the cottage, the tree, the hill, and the stream.

But it was only for a single second.

It lightened. Then you saw. But the sight was no sooner here than it was gone again, and all was blackness and darkness just as before. But that one second was like day; like *all* the seconds of day, and all its minutes and all its hours. Dark as was the night, that brief flash shone as the day.

I have reminded you about the lightning because I want to talk to you awhile of that tenderness of heart which shares other people's troubles. We have known men who generally live dull and hard and selfish lives, who yet for one moment have been softened and melted and have become tender, beautiful, noble, lovingly bearing another's burdens. In that moment they were like Christ, like Him just as a flash in the night is like day. Their charming exception is *His* rule. What their lives were for that brief moment, His life is always. His disposition is constantly beatiful, everywhere and to all people—"The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

I have read the story of a stooping, tottering old man, whose faithful dog had been taken from him, a dog he loved and which tenderly loved him. They had lived together many years, and he could not get it again without paying a fine altogether beyond his small means; and there he stood near his dog's prison, his two hands

"It was only for a second."

resting on his stick, his eyes filling with tears, dumb, almost dying, with pain.

"It will be shot," he was saying to himself, "I cannot pay."

And the shrivelled, old, brown face crumpled up still more, and he wept, in the quiet way of a broken-down old man. He could not pay; he had no money, only some children and a bedridden wife. And he loved the rough thing; they all loved it. He was the picture of helpless misery. And people who passed looked at him.

First one and then another saw him, came nearer and stood and spoke to him till a little crowd had gathered, all full of pity for the pitiable old man. Then one mite of a child went up to him and thrust a farthing into his hand, saying, as she looked into his face,

"Now can you pay?"

For one moment the crowd laughed, but in the next they were feeling in their pockets and handing out coppers and silver, till the sad old man had enough to redeem his dog.

Now that child and that crowd bore that old man's burden. They took an interest in his sorrow, and did for him what they would all have done for themselves, if they had had the power—they *got rid of it.* They felt his misery; it weighed on them too till it was gone, and then they were all happy.

Now Christ is like them, as the full, long shining day is like a quick flash in the night.

Here is another picture. One frosty noon in winter, just after the clock had struck twelve, a thin, sickly-looking, ragged girl of ten years old, with a timid, feeble step, descended the steepest hill in a Yorkshire town, carrying in her hand a basin tied in a handkerchief—her father's dinner. The sloping path was slippery, and the little maid fell, and with her fall came great misery; not that she had injured her poor, bony limbs, nor altogether because she had sadly dirted her scanty garments; but that the basin was broken, and the dinner spilt into the wet mud. She gathered herself up, looked on the fragments of crockery and potatoes with a helpless dread, and began to cry bitter, scalding tears. The fact is, she was afraid of punishment. The poor, sickly child trembled to go either forward to her father or back to her mother.

A passer-by, touched by her look, stopped, and learnt the truth. He felt the girl must have brutal parents, and he had the *feeling* of this thin child being struck by them, and he could not bear it; he was miserable. So he took her with him in search of a cook's-shop, bought a basin, and ordered it to be filled with steaming, savoury food, and could not resist the temptation to give the half-famished child a bowl of soup to drink while the parcel was being got ready; and, having paid, sent her on her way rejoicing.

That man's feelings were another flash in the night; another sweet gleam of the infinite goodness of the heart of Jesus, The Burden Bearer.

Here is still another. I chanced to see one day in London a sad-looking woman with a baby on her arm and a weary little girl dragging at her torn, thin gown, coming down a busy street on a burning summer day, and a lemon-drink seller, with his bright tin stand, its yellow lemon at one end and its drinking-glass at the other, go across the road to them and say, "Here," as he handed a full glass of his lemon-water to the least child and then to the rest; and then he went back to his place.

He had a weary weight at his heart as he saw the weary look of suffering at theirs, and he took it away both from himself and from them, as much as he could, by giving them a drink.

That wee deed made the man a wee bit like Christ. It was a little flash in the night.

Indeed when any heart swells with sympathy, and is sad with tenderness for somebody else's pains and sorrows and woes, and has strong longings to help, then it feels as Christ feels. This is called "the law of Christ," which means the custom, the *habit*, the constant disposition of Christ.

Now I want you thoroughly to understand this lovely habit of Jesus towards want and weakness, and sorrow and pain. Tell your own heart of it every time you see such things, at home or from home, and let your own life acquire the same. Do that with other people's troubles and you will grow wise, and benevolent, and merciful, and happy; all of which too few children, and men indeed, are, just

because they do not try to live in the same good spirit towards others which Jesus did.

And if ever you are in trouble yourself, say to yourself, "Never mind, for Jesus feels with me;" and then, in spite of tears, life will be peaceful and prosperous and strong.

But above all, try to imitate Him in the thousand and one little useful things of ordinary life. In the nursery, the playground, the schoolroom, in the commonest daily events, keep a kindly heart, cherish the habit of looking at others' needs, bearing weights that weigh on other hearts, for it is only so you yourself will grow into this sweet habit of Christ, and come truly to *know* him.

## Chapter XI.

# SOFT ANSWERS.

"A soft answer turneth away wrath."—*Proverbs* xv. 1.

One of the most difficult of all the duties of young folks is to know and do, just there and then, the will of God, when people suddenly break into a bad temper with them.

No doubt bright and happy feelings are the rule of their lives; but, all unexpectedly, somebody sometimes gets vexed, and dark looks and hot and angry words follow. It seems as if, do what they will, bad temper will have its turn.

Now the Bible tells us that the vexations we feel are in themselves not wrong; we may be "angry and not sin."

Unkind, thoughtless, and stupid things cannot be pleasing to us; and people, I am sorry to confess, grown-up people as well as little people, will occasionally do such things; and then nothing is so quick and natural as irritation and anger. It is not a pleasant thing to get a snowball right in your neck, or a cricket-ball thoughtlessly flung at your head; but matters are made even still worse if you imagine that there was utter indifference as to your feelings, and, above all, deliberate intention in the person who did it to vex and hurt you. Then black looks gather on the brow, and fiery words leap to the lips, and sometimes a sharp slap or a heavy blow follows. Then more bad feeling is roused; the slapped child is not going to stand that. He is angry, looks black, gives hard words and blows back again, and there is a quarrel, and everybody is miserable, and it ends up in a cry. Clearly now, somewhere there is sin. And what is to be done to prevent that?

There is one text in the Old Testament which is a splendid guide to little folks who don't want to do wrong and don't like quarrels and cries. It is brimful of the spirit of Jesus, which is the only real preventive of wrong; and it has kept many an hour in young lives all good, bright, and beautiful, which, but for it, would have been dark and wretched and wrong. It is this, "A soft answer turneth away wrath."

I know an old English castle which stands to-day in all its ancient glory—enormous towers, and huge gates, and spacious courts, and gorgeous sculptured halls—just because it once gave "a soft answer" to enemies that in wrath had come to destroy it.

They came against it with spear and sword, and bomb-shell and cannon, planted themselves right opposite to its towers and gates, and fully expected in a few hours to see them tumbled and battered, blown and shattered to pieces; for the gates were old, and though they looked ever so fine and strong, they were weak before big iron balls flung by powder and cannon. They had been made in the older days to defend the castle against bow and arrows, when little more than these were used by fighting men. And the towers were old though they looked so noble and firm. They had been built at the same time, when the gates were made, and in the same way; for then castle-builders had not even dreamed of such terrible weapons as were to be used to-day.

The soldiers were so sure of victory that they could almost see it, even before they had fired a single gun: they could see gates and towers all tumbling down, and fancied themselves rushing on over their ruins into the castle there, taking the owner a prisoner and all its wealth and treasures for themselves.

They planted their cannons and mortars, filled them with powder, and shot and shell, and fired them off one after another.

"Boom, boom," went the cannons. "Crack" went the bombshells, and the castle was surrounded with thunder, and flame, and smoke.

Flash followed flash, and boom followed boom. Balls whizzed and whizzed, and shells banged and burst; but, to the soldiers' amazement, the gates did not break and the towers did not fall.

More powder and more shot, and yet the castle stood.

Away went still more powder and still more shot and shell, till powder and shot and shell were at length all done. Yet not a stone would fall, not a plank would split, and the owner was still the owner, snug and safe within.

How could this be? Were they not real walls? Was the castle enchanted? Oh, yes, they were real walls enough; but in a sense the castle was enchanted, for it had a rarely shrewd common-sense English lady for its owner—and shrewd common sense (you will find it so as you get older) does for all it touches more than the most wonderful wand of fairy enchanter.

So when the lady heard that "the enemy" with its cannon was coming to batter down her castle-gates and take her castle from her, she simply just got all the wool-bags that she could. Happily she lived in a wool-market town, where bags of wool were plentiful. Then she tied them fast together, and let down wool-bags over the towers, and wool-bags over the gate, till they were all covered with wool-bags, and looked like walls of wool-bags. Then she locked the gate herself, and cheered her men and sat down within.

Then the enemy came and saw it, laughed in amusement and scorn; but their laugh soon changed, as that sort of laugh almost always does. They saw their cannon-balls hit against the bags, the soft wool-bags, and the bags broke their blows and sent them springing back, harmless, into the moat below. They saw ball after ball follow the same course, and prove altogether useless, till the powder was all gone and the balls were all used up. And the castle was *unharmed.*

And they gave up laughing and fighting too; and admiring the lady's shrewdness, just packed up and went away.

Those soldiers had attacked the castle with "wrath," and the castle had made "a soft answer."

We can fancy how the lady when the bangs ceased and the silence came, as she looked over the turrets of her castle-wall, chuckled to herself and was glad. And thousands of boys and girls have been just as shrewd and sensible. They have heard angry words and have given soft answers, and have chuckled too, and been glad that they were not overcome of evil. They have *turned* the anger, —turned it away from their own hearts at least.

Give kindly words for cruel ones, good-mannered words for ill-bred ones, quiet words for hasty ones, and you will always win at least the blessedness of the peacemaker, which is good and priceless.

Keep plenty of wool-bags. "A soft answer turneth away wrath."

## Chapter XII.

## BLASTING A ROCK.

"Children, obey your parents."—*Colossians* iii. 20.

I WANT to show you the reason why you should obey your parents. The reason lies in the kind of heart God has given parents. So I want you to see a boy in bed, ill, so ill that unless somebody will take great care of him he will die.

He had lived twelve years in his little native town, and many a kind heart knew him well and would have been very glad to nurse him till he was better; for they loved him, because he had beautiful qualities, and yesterday he had a beautiful face, frank and open and honest as it was

fresh, round, and rosy. But his mother is living, and by his side, so there is no need for other hands to dress his poor wounded face and to put tiny drops of food through the two big blisters where yesterday two rosy lips had been.

It was his face that was killing him. It felt to him as if it was a burning fire. His two eyes were closed; he had been struck blind; the hair on his brow was burnt off.

Yesterday he could run and laugh and leap with the happiest boy in the town, and brought home from his school a face all aglow with health and eyes bright with joy. Yet now to-day, poor boy, he lies stretched on his little bed in darkness and agony and within a few days of death; so, at least, both the doctor and his poor mother fear.

All the little town knows about it, for Charlie Fox's father is a considerable man in the town, and yesterday Charlie had been led between two boys through its principal street a pitiable sight. Everybody was full of sadness for him, but the saddest hearts of all were his father's and mother's. I shall never forget the pale face of his mother as I saw her sitting by the bedside when my mother took me to see my little friend. But I did not see him, only a sheet of cotton-wool where his poor scorched face was beneath, and his tender mother's face white as that sheet of cotton-wool, with the big bitter tears of a broken heart standing in her eyes.

Poor Charlie! He was a great favourite with every-

body, and only yesterday life in him was beating and panting and joyous and free, and he was talking incessantly. He loved his mother with all his boyish heart, and never deliberately wished to be disobedient to her. But there he lay, silent and still, as if awaiting death, and, what is most sad, all through disobedience.

Yesterday, when returning with his satchel on his back from school, a temptation had assailed him which had been too strong. A bright, healthy navvy's boy with a small parcel of blasting-powder was going a little way out of the town to "blast a rock" on the hill. The idea of an explosion, the sight of the sudden blaze and the sound of the loud "bang," captivated him, and he asked—

"Are you going far?"

He coloured as he asked, for he knew as well as possible that his mother and father would not countenance his going. True, he had never asked them, but when you know the hearts of people, you know also their wishes and don't need to ask them. He knew well enough what their will would have been if it had been asked; we may say he knew what their will *was*, though it never had been asked. On that point he might have been sure and certain if he had had what Jesus calls "a single eye," if he had thought of them alone. But he thought of them only a little, and of the enjoyable sight and sound of the blast a great deal. So he did not think it would be very wicked to go. Had he thought wholly of his mother he would have said "No" for her sake, for she was a great

deal to him; but, all the same, he said "Yes," and went.

The rest of the party were in great delight, and chattered and laughed and were full of mischievous antics: but Charlie was silent, and, to tell the truth, a tiny bit miserable. He had never spoken to the leading boy before, and would never have thought of speaking to him but for the blasting-powder, which he had just brought from the cutting for the new railway that was being made.

They reached the chosen spot; the powder was thrust under a projecting lump of rock, and the touch was lighted.

Charlie was the only delicate-looking boy in the party, and his manner was timid and shy. The fact is, he was not feeling at all like himself. So when after a minute or two the powder did not go off, and the touch they had lighted to set it off did not seem to burn and was looking dull and perhaps gone out, they dared "the young gentleman," as they rather satirically called him, to go and "blow it a bit."

The two sweet blue eyes glanced at the jeerers and then took courage, rushed to the dull touch, and blew it with a good full-cheeked blow. The touch glowed, the powder exploded right in his face and hurled him upon his back to the ground.

Charlie jumped to his feet again.

It was a lovely summer day, but he could not see; the field and the sky were gone, and the boys saw that the

flesh of his countenance was black and burnt to a cinder. He could not speak; his lips were made up. He felt out with his hands and the boys took hold of them.

They were dreadfully distressed about it, and would have given a great deal to recall those jeering words which had spurred Charlie's brave little spirit to this dreadful disaster.

And they led him home, for he had lost his eyesight, and the power of walking was almost gone; and by this time memory had begun to work and visions of his mother's dismay had come to him; and his poor heart sank in him as a weight sinks down into the sea.

His body and his soul were in pain, and I do not know which was suffering the more cruel smart. They led him to his mother's door and his mother saw him.

The boys gave up their charge and did not stop to tell their tale, but stole quickly away, and had to be hunted out afterwards to tell it, for poor Charlie could not speak.

The doctor dressed his bleared, blistered, bleeding face, and carefully covered it up with oil and cotton-wool, and day and night Charlie moaned, and his mother, patient, tender soul, nursed him, and watched him, and cried. Through those long fevered nights and days she never left poor Charlie's side. She fought with death and pain which were struggling for her child as she would have fought with wolves, had it been wolves instead of burns that were seeking his life. How good, and tender, and brave she was! And big bitter tears fell down her cheeks

on to the apron on her knee when she could do no more but sit and watch.

Then it was Charlie's little brother learnt to climb on to her knee, and quietly rest his little cheek against hers to comfort her and say, "He'll get better," in a pretty petting way; for he knew, as a little child can know, why the sorrow was so great. Thanks to that nursing, though many weeks passed first, Charlie did at length get better, so that he could sit up in his bed, and after many more he was down-stairs again, and his poor drawn face was uncovered, and his neighbours saw it.

"He is young," they said, in tones full of sadness and hope, as going away they stood with the mother in the hall, "so perhaps he will grow out of it."

It shocked them to see the raw-looking streaky flesh which had once been such a bright and beautiful young boy's face.

But the heart fullest both of sadness and hope was his mother's heart. It was a sore, sore trouble to her. Willingly, if she might, would she have changed faces with her child. To have been allowed such a joy, she would have gladly given all she had besides. Never any more did she enjoy the sight of her own shapely face now that poor Charlie's was so sad to look on.

And Charlie grew older and went about; but however glad he was he could never smile again, his features were stiff; his eyelashes never grew, though his eyelids had opened again, and it was with two watery inflamed eyes

"Charlie, the night before."

that he saw; his lips were never again different from the rest of his face, and people's eyes turned away from the sight of him. He could not obtain employment. No one chose him as a companion.

But his mother loved him still. Though she remembered the sweet, soft, peach-like face of the baby she had folded to her bosom to feed and hush to sleep, and the bonny curly brows, and two twinkling eyes, and ruddy, open countenance with which, the night before, he had gone to bed; yet even with pretty sights like these before her, she had never known how warmly she loved Charlie until she had seen his poor face little heaps of blackened blisters. And in spite of all the pain it gave her ever after, she was deeply happy to be of use to him. Till she died he lived with her, and in her death that spoilt face was the last face she pressed to her lips to kiss.

Now think of this! Charlie had turned her boy, her pride, lovely to look at, into a sight of sorrow and pain. He spoilt all her after life, yet she loved him, and only thought of the sorrow he had brought on himself, and lived to lighten it.

Such is a mother, my child; and though a father can *do* less, he can feel in his heart great depths of sorrow.

God made them so.

Charlie did a naughty thing, thinking little of it, and it lay upon their poor hearts for life.

Parents cannot be free from what you do. God made them so, and for your sake it was He did it.

And that is why He will not let you do what they do not want; you have no business to do it. It is wrong. It is a wicked thing to be disobedient to one whose heart and life God has made to be so hurt and injured by your disobedience. When God says, "Children, obey your parents," He is only taking care of those tender, sensitive hearts He has made.

An act of disobedience, then, is cowardly, cruel, and wicked.

It is cowardly, for you would not be disobedient if your parents were there.

It is cruel. If it comes to your parents' knowledge it will pain and hurt them. It may only pain them a little; but who are you that you should dare to pain them, even a little? It may pain them much. Charlie did not *intend* to pain his parents at all, but he saddened and spoilt their whole after lives.

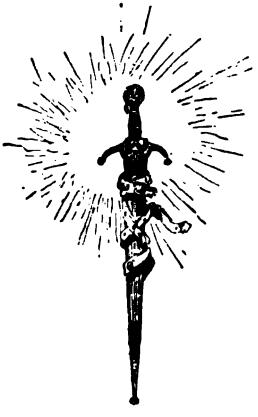
It is cruel and cowardly, because you could not pain them at all if they did not *love* you. It is their love you can hurt.

It is wicked too, for it was God who made their hearts like that. He tied their joys and sorrows close up with your little lives. And He cannot find it in His heart to let you hurt them; and so, my child, remember that when you find it in your heart to hurt them you are wicked.

But it was for your good. *You* were in the mind of God, our maker, when He made your fathers and mothers so.

It was for the good of their children that He gave them such a deep interest in all their children do. So you are cruel to yourselves, and wicked against yourselves, when you disobey your parents.

Stick to the commandment, "Obey your parents," for the commandment is good, and obedience is right.



CHAPTER XIII.

## THE EASE OF PLEASING GOD.

**"I do always those things that please Him."—*John* viii. 29.**

LET us think about the delight Jesus found in the feeling that He pleased God, for chief among all His pleasures was this, "I do always those things that please Him." As a boy and as a man, His eye was always bright, and His

spirit was always glad in the personal interest and pleasure which He knew God took in His ways. So loving and so beautiful was God to Him, that all other wishes were lost in the wish, the passion, to please Him.

The very beginning, then, of a life which is ever to have the wish like Jesus, is to have a God like Jesus. I fear many young minds have a sombre and gloomy, perhaps dreadful, thought when they think of God. To the mind of the boy Jesus, thoughts of God could never have been anything but brightness, and beauty, and joy.

And it took, oh, so little to please God!

It was He who had made the pretty flowers, and found pleasure in the arrangements and forms of their little petals, and in the soft, fluffy, powdery beauty down there in their hearts where the bee went. He was pleased to see the panting joy of the little thing drinking up the tiny drop of honey He had himself squeezed out for it there, just on purpose to give it that very joy.

He was full of sympathy too.

Never did a little fledgling sparrow learning to fly, too tired to do any work, settle on a twig to rest, or, sick and done, fall down to the ground to die, but God knew all about it, and saw it all just as well as if there was not one single thing to see besides.

God's eye was a gentle and tender eye looking out of a large and beautiful heart, and it was everywhere. Even a tiny bit of moss, growing on its bare hard rock away in a far corner of the desert, where there was nobody else to

watch and admire it, could please Him. He saw the little thing living and working where nothing else could live, making the best of everything, sending up its little forests of tiny fronds, spreading its tiny soft beds and shade for tiny, tiny creatures that wearied themselves by their labours there.

Yes, little things, very very little things, could please the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; He had pleasure in all the works of His hands; and far, far the most of these were very little. So He could take pleasure, of course, in the thoughts and ways of a loving, earnest child.

Now what are your wants? Would *you* please God? Then you must have thoughts of God as bright and beautiful as were the thoughts of Jesus; you never can without. For you will then feel that He can be pleased with little things such as boys and girls can do, and therefore *you* can please Him; and this thought will make you like Jesus. He believed that a child *could* please God.

The child who romps and laughs away its holiday is doing the will of God, but God has a higher will for it than this, and a higher will has its higher joy; for there are joys that are natural—the joys of romps—and there are joys that are spiritual, the joys of kindness and duty. They are both of God, but one is earthly and the other is heavenly; and the heavenly was the joy of Jesus.

The next thing beautiful thoughts of God will do for you is this: they will make you *long* to please God, and

that wish will make you still more like Jesus; for He longed to please God and did His best. And just because of that, He must please Him; for no one ever wanted to please God and failed. To really want to please is to please *Him* at least. The want *alone* is pleasure to Him. So the boy Jesus pleased God, "well pleased" Him, because, if for nothing else, He always wanted to do things which pleased Him.

The next thing is to know *what kind of things* a child can do that will please God. Well then, what, when a child, did Jesus do?

We are told that He lived a life of kindness to his parents and his companions, and doubtless to all the creatures of God that knew Him. And this is all that we know He did when a child. And that pleased God; for that was all God gave Him to do.

And that is what He gives you to do. He wants you to live so that all who know you shall like you. It may sound very strange to say that what your little companions and your simple neighbours "like" you to do to them, and what you would "like" them to do to you, is just what God likes, too. But it is so; for your parents' hearts, and your companions' hearts, are still so much like the heart of God, in whose image the Bible tells us they were originally made, that, even if they do not do and say what is good and lovely, they like to see and hear what is good and lovely. And especially when it is said or done to themselves.

"Lovely and of good report, not where he lives alone."

A dutiful son, an affectionate brother, any child who delights to do what he should do, what God made simple, natural mothers and fathers, companions and neighbours, to need and to rejoice in, is doing God's will. God's will was written in these peoples' hearts. So he is lovely and of good report, not where he lives alone, but in heaven also, with God.

So, Jesus says, we may see just what God would be pleased to see us do if we look at what we are pleased with in the doings of other people. Nobody likes to be told stories, to be treated unfairly or unkindly; so nobody ought to tell any stories or to treat anybody unfairly or unkindly. When people are ill or old it is painful to them to feel neglected; so to neglect them is wrong, wrong because unkind. So we know neglect was far from the heart of the boy Jesus. The way He looked, the way He spoke, the way he acted was so utterly unselfish, so refined and considerate, that he won at once the favour of God and the favour of man.

But do remember this. Favour with man is, after all, much harder to win than favour with God. Man is much slower to give you his good word than is God; just because you are good in your heart before you are good in your life; and God sees your heart, and takes a deep joy in its wishes and wants.

The most loving of men see only what you *do*; God sees what you *want* to do.

If you love the good, and long to do it, though you are

constantly failing in your efforts, He is pleased with the love. So, your heart is right in the sight of God long before your life can possibly be right in the sight of man.

So God, at least, sees you at your best, and He loves to do so.

Let a boy sincerely strive to do what is right, yet unfortunately fail, and he will find the most loving earthly father, nay, even his own self, a far less kindly judge than is his Fatherin heaven. Over his break-down, he himself may be sad, and his father angry, yet God may be pleased, well pleased, because He sees the boy's heart, and sees that his wishes are right.

"It's no *use* trying," said a boy one day to his father, when angry with him for an outbreak of temper with a brother who was a cool and rather provoking fellow. "It's no *use* trying; I've been doing my best, and I get scolded all the same."

But when trying is no use in pleasing man, remember it is *always* of use in pleasing God. If you want, and pray, and struggle to be true and good, you will always, even amid many faults and failures, yes, *always* do something with which God will be pleased.

## Chapter XIV.

## "A DEAR OLD DOG."

"For love is of God."—
1 *John* iv. 7.

FEW animals so attract the sympathy of children, indeed of everybody, and none awakens such warm personal feeling towards it, as "a dear old dog."

Yet—and it seems almost impossible to believe it—a common sewer rat sitting up upon our hearthrug would scarcely awaken in us feelings more disagreeable than those with which a dog used to be regarded in Bible days, and is even still regarded in Bible lands.

I want to talk to you about dogs; not that I care just now that you should understand about *them*, but I want you to see what love and training have done for dogs, and to understand what a powerful, wonderful thing love is; and how it can make ugly characters beautiful. That is, I want you to understand what Redemption is, and how God, just because He is Love and very patient too, can redeem the most abominable, and make the ugliest characters lovely, changing His enemies into His fast and faithful friends, so making a new heaven and a new earth where everybody is good, and glad, and lovely as the angels.

So let us begin at the beginning. Dogs, you remember, are often mentioned in the Bible and always with contempt, and they deserved their ill-name. They had dirty coats, villainous faces, filthy habits, and were generally heartless, faithless, and abominable. When St. Paul wanted to say as many bad things about certain men as he could in one single word, he called them dogs. "Beware of dogs!" is a warning against men whose characters were too abominable to be named.

Yet to-day the dog is our most faithful servant and friend —the pet of our childhood, the companion of our old age.

Dogs seem capable of a deep love to man, often rivalling the love of kith and kin. They have shown constancy and tenderness to their dead masters, like Rachel to her dead children, refusing to be comforted because they are not. And sometimes—this is quite true—they have died of a broken heart.

But let me tell you a story which happened in a famous mountain pass between Piedmont and Valois—and incidents like it have often happened there—a story about dogs and a dying man.

This man is a traveller across the mountain. He is climbing up its rough, steep roads; before nightfall, if all goes well, he will have reached a place to sleep. The sky becomes grey and threatening, and a little snow begins to fall. He looks at the clouds and pushes rapidly on. The snow continues, and before the twilight the road has become invisible, and at every step walking grows more difficult and wearying. The twilight falls, and the dark day becomes darker night. Long after the house he is seeking should have been in sight, he can see nothing; the air is black, and his feet sink in soft banks of drifted snow. He becomes low-spirited, bewildered, and miserable. In a blinding storm, he wearily wanders on and misses his way.

At length the poor fellow is exhausted, and stands a moment to wipe cold sweat from his brow. Then he shouts in hope of being heard. But, shout as he will, his voice dies against the thick-falling snow about his head. He has no means of even guessing where he is. And as he stands, the snow rises higher and higher against his limbs. He continues to move, growing feebler and more bewildered at every step. A great dread falls upon him. He is lost in the snow! He thinks of his children and his wife, and the tears roll down his frozen cheeks. What can he do? He is helpless. So with a silent cry to God, he wraps his cloak

more closely about him, and stands where he is, with the faint hope that the snow may cease, and that after all he may live till morning. But the terrible snow still falls. In a little while he is buried deep beneath it, and swoons away.

At the house that he is seeking the idea of travellers arriving on such a night has long been given up; bars and bolts have been fastened, and the shutters shut. Mounds of snow have risen high against doors and windows, and the people in it are now preparing to go to bed.

Suddenly they start and listen. There is a sound of voices outside.

They listen again.

The sound is repeated. It is the deep, low bay of their dogs crying for help. They have been crying for an hour, but the thick wool curtain of the falling snow had killed the sound. Now that the snow has ceased, the people inside hear distinctly.

Instantly one of them lights his horn-lantern, seizes on a bottle of cordial, unbolts the door, and goes out into the black night, across the freezing snow.

Again the dogs' long, plaintive voices sound through the night like the cries of big, broken hearts in prayer to God.

The man well knows their meaning—they have found a human being in the snow, lost and dying. With his lantern he follows the sound. The dogs look out on the approaching light glimmering up towards the dark sky,

and they know what that means—help is coming; and they bay again to assist their master to find his way.

The plaintive cries which cried to the one to get a lantern and a bottle and come out, cried to the others in the house to make up a warm fire, prepare hot blankets, throw open all the shutters, and put lights at each casement to help the searcher to find his homeward way.

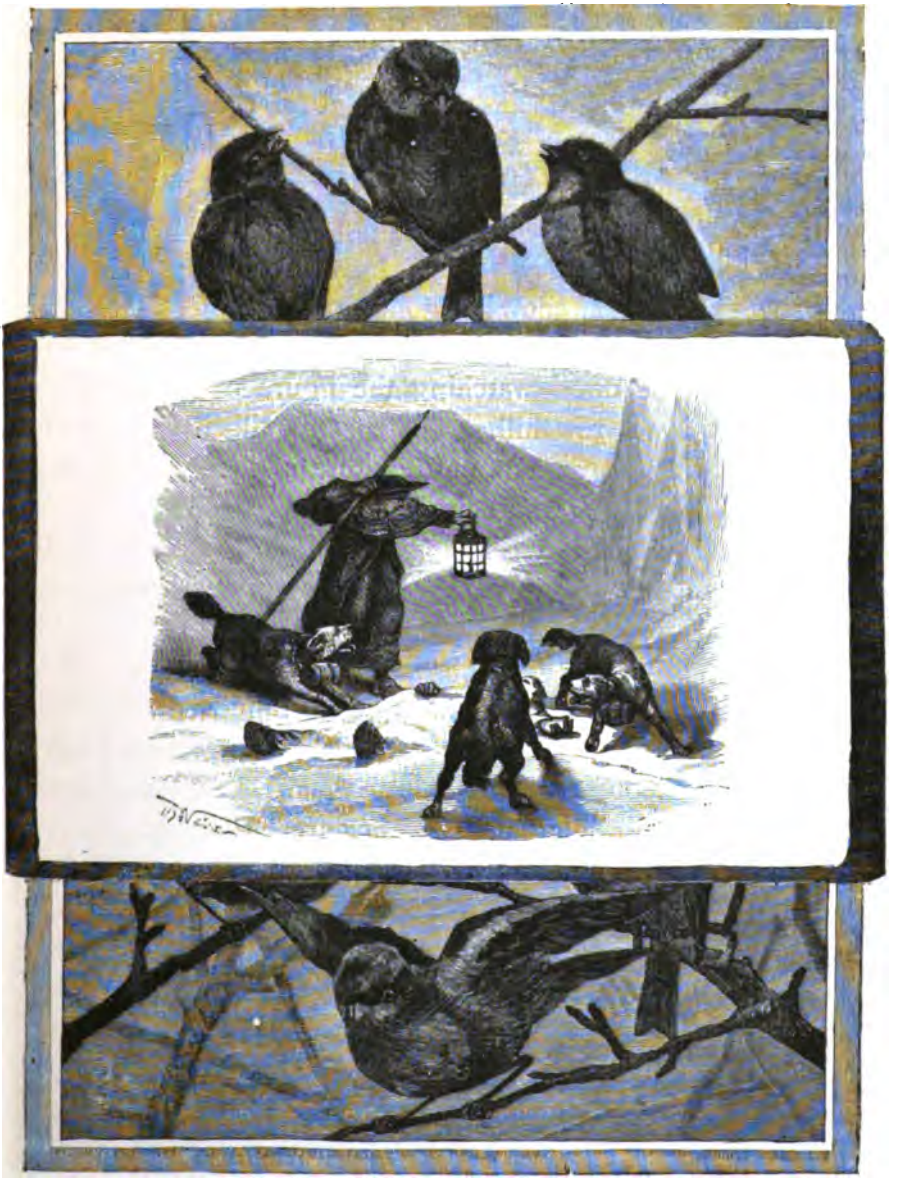
All are busy.

The dogs are busy too. Between their cries they clear away the snow from the unconscious man, pull the cloak from off his face, lick his frozen hands and cheeks with their rough, warm tongues, breathe their warm breath upon him, and do all that thoughtful, tender anxiety can suggest.

When the searcher reaches the dogs, he finds the motionless body of a man with eyes closed as in death. He pours the cordial into him, raises him up, and carries him home, the dogs the while watching with deepest interest, in hope that help has not come too late. He is carried to the inn, and warmed and rubbed. Death is very near to him, widowhood to his wife, and orphanage to his little children; but the dogs—yes, the dogs, have saved them all!

For now, as he lies in the warmth of the hospice's hearth, with the firelight there comes back into his pale lips their rosy colour, and his eyelids slowly unclose on two curly-coated anxious watchers.

His feeble hand goes out to touch their noble heads.



"When the searcher reaches the dogs."

Feeble tears brim into his eyes. But for them, he would have been now dead in the snow!

The dogs lick the pale hands that touch them, and in response kindly lay their heads on the reviving man's breast, and seem quietly happy.

In a day or two the snow has gone, and the roads are clear.

It is a cloudless morning, and the dogs are standing on the step at the door, watching the figure of a man disappearing down the hill. They watch till it is out of sight, and then they go in and lie down under the kitchen-table. These are *dogs*, the dogs of St. Bernard.

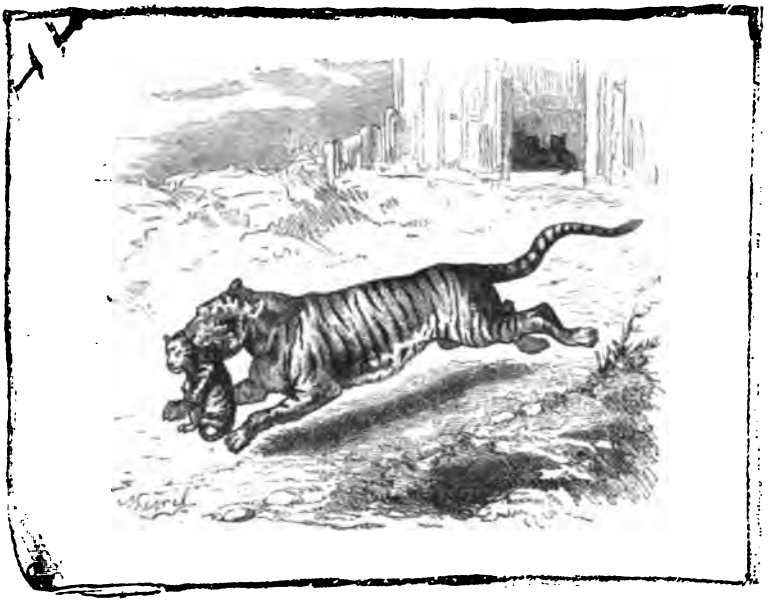
So, what *was* the fit emblem of all that is false, and faithless, and filthy has become man's serious, sensible, and faithful friend.

And how?

It is all of love—the gentle, mighty influence of love. Love has penetrated their hearts. Human souls have touched their souls and humanised them. Yes, they have been loved and trained into what they are. Patience, long-suffering, and mercy *through many years*—these have, in the long run, changed and redeemed the hated and hateful into the beloved and beautiful.

That is redemption.

And God's redemption is like that. It is to be loved and trained, trained and loved into higher, nobler life. That is the power which is to change us until we are God's enemies no longer, but His faithful and affectionate friends.



## Chapter XV.

## THE PARENTS' PASSION FOR THE CHILD.

"Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name."—*St. Matthew* vi. 9.

I WANT to speak to you of the beautifulness of the ways of parents with their young. Under the influence of their little ones, even in savage beasts, ugly selfishness and savagery give place to lovely tenderness and patient care. No longer do the strongest brutes seem grand for their power, but by reason of the higher grandeur of their gentleness. Whatever it touches, the parent-spirit beautifies. And as God has strewn the morning with dewy drops that

each reflect the sun, so He has strewn the world with parent hearts that each reflect Himself.

Look at the hen with her chickens under her wings. How proud, serene, and happy! A little fluffy head peeps out and chirps its hunger, and then another. She rises and seeks a place to scratch for food, where she works like a little slave till some hand is put out to touch one of them. Then in an instant she stops. Bumfling herself up to look as formidable as she can, and hurling her cawing threatenings, she flings herself between her young and danger. Brave mother! The timidest of fowls is at once a daring hero. Till she had young she would have fled from a child; now, she will fly at a man.

Just as beautiful is the parent-spirit among wild, even savage beasts. Yonder, away amid the dreary plains of snow and rocks of ice, the gloomy, peevish bear has a heart bright and warm for her young. Men who have thoughtlessly shot them down have seen big tears roll down the bereaved mother's cheeks, and heard her lift up her now almost human voice in lamentation, and mourning, and woe, almost breaking their hearts and making them feel how much they would give to bring back the dead cubs to life again.

Inspired, too, by the spirit of their young, brutes of heavy limbs and lumbering gait become quite light and playful. The huge, clumsy hippopotamus, which lives in the wilds and rivers of Africa, which can trample to ruin a rice-field, or bite a canoe in two with its enormous jaws,

Livingstone saw giving its baby a ride on its back, and taking it out for a little sail on the river. Terrible she-wolves, in the forests of Russia, dreaded by even armed travellers and in their hunger destroying men, have pretty ways with their young.

The handsome, sly, cruel, and crafty tiger, which generally runs at the approach of danger, her hunters tell us, turns hero when a mother. Seek only her own life, and she will sneak away; seek the life of her cubs, and she grandly stands and forbids. She becomes heroic as a human parent "standing and talking with the enemy in the gate." With the passion of her heart quivering in every limb, with raised head and distended nostrils, she breathes defiance to the danger. If robbed of her young, she becomes the terror of the neighbourhood, and will run any risk to recover them.

The story is told of a tigress whose cubs, captured in her absence, and safely conveyed from her lair to a cage in the distant hut of some sportsmen, were rescued by their mother's courage and suffering. She tracked the hunters, found their cage, broke it, wounding her paw in the doing of it, seized them one by one, and carried them in her mouth back, first to the nearest point in the jungle, then to their distant home. She saw that she was watched by armed men, and clearly knew the dread meaning of the smell of powder and the sight of guns, for she threw her own body awkwardly between the little ones which she carried and the men with the guns; but they were too

captivated by her brave, motherly pluck, limping away with her treasures, to do her one bit of harm.

Or watch the gentle chamois spring its way along the edges of inaccessible mountains followed by its young kid. Danger appears—a hungry vulture in the air is seeking food. The mother sees.

Now watch her ways.

The huge bird descends, beating his powerful wings, setting his sharp talons, uttering his terrifying screams, to seize her kid and bear it away to devour. But the vulture has to reckon with the mother first. She signs to her young. It crouches behind her, almost underneath her. Then the struggle begins, and a terrible one it is. Beating with his wings, tearing with his claws, the huge bird dashes itself against the tiny kid's defender. Her standing-ground is but a narrow ledge. The furious vulture would dislodge her to dash her to pieces below; but she stands like the very rock itself. Deep gashes are made in the mother's flesh. The beak and talons of the vulture are quickly covered with bits of hairy skin and are dripping with blood. While, beaten off, he withdraws a space, she glances a quick eye beneath her and sees that it is *hers* and not her kid's blood. Nerved with this joy, she digs her curved horns deeper into his breast as he batters down on her again.

So the battle goes on.

Naturally timid, she is now undaunted. Far gentler and feebler than her savage foe, she is now more mighty.

"It crouches behind her, almost underneath her."

Her babe and suckling has transformed her. God has ordained her strength in it.

At length she is the victor. Disheartened and exhausted, the vulture goes away shrieking with vexation and wounds.

Surely, never did plumes become a conqueror, or crown beautify a king, as the blood and feathers on the horns and brow of that brave mother become and beautify her. They are the diadem of a mother's glory.

And David speaks of the parental spirit of the lion, the most savage, most cruel and remorseless of beasts. What miles will it travel, what risks will it run, what enemies will it dare, that its little ones may not "lack and suffer hunger!" He had himself seen it, in the lambing time, leap the wall of the sheepfold, dare the shepherds and dogs, and clubs and spears, and arrows and stones, to capture a kid and carry it away for their supper; and one of them had once lost its life at his own hands in the attempt. He slew the lion and rescued the kid, and that night at least the young lions did lack their meal and suffer hunger, but only because the brave father was dead.

And why have I told you all this?

Why? Because there is not a single young thing born into the world with the riches of a parent's love that does not call upon us to rejoice in God. Each and all have wealth of love enough, and more than enough, to defend them, to train them, to feel, to care, to labour for them,

and out of a willing and patient heart to supply all their needs.

Riches enough for children there are in all parents—in the snarling wolf, and the roaring lion, and the silly barn-door fowl!

What, then, must be the riches for us in the heart of our Father, God?

If that name meant to us—and we are all His offspring—all that it ought to mean—what it meant to David at the time when he wrote "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing"—if that meant to us what parent means even to baby beasts, we should not be contented only; we should shout aloud and clap our hands for joy. As we said, "Our Father, which art in heaven," our deep rapture at the truth would be what Jesus meant when he said, "Hallowed be Thy Name."

## CHAPTER XVI.

## A HIGH DAY WITH THE ANGELS.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest."—*Luke* ii. 13 and 14.

CHILDREN are all far too apt to think of any "perfectly holy" life as lacking altogether the strong charm of natural joys. And as for angels knowing any of those bright happy moments when young flesh and blood throbs and leaps with glad, glorious feelings, that is out of the question; they know nothing half so grand. Life in heaven may be, and no doubt is, very good and proper, and all that sort of

thing. And perhaps it is a little joyous, in a weakly, invalidish sort of a way; but young hearts like theirs would have to be incessantly cautious as to how they behaved if they were there. Heaven is a kind of beautiful church, where all natural life is restrained, a place altogether too serious for them. So thousands of children have been led to think.

But this is all wrong. On the contrary, at joyous Christmas-time—and the more beautiful with joy the better—is the very best time to know heaven and its angels. It is in your hours of rapture you best understand what it is to be holy. When seeing beautiful sights and hearing sounds of gladness, when great joy is upon you, and all around you is filled with free, harmless delight, then it is you are in the very best of moods to understand what it is to be an angel, at all events, what it was to be an angel at Bethlehem. That *Christmas* bit of their life was no stiff, cold monotony. Songs broke out of them as they do out of you when some glad surprise, some great delight, has come upon you. They had never had joy like this before, and they filled the sky with its sounds.

And as for all angels' joys, they are just as real, and as fresh, and as hearty as the joys of the frankest young human heart. They praise God with just the same genuineness of feeling as that group of little children at their summer holiday down by the sea praise that generous brother there who is building before their eyes big "forts" and making "great big holes" and high "mountains" out of the sand on

the shore, and all for them. Their free, generous delight as they clap him and send their shouts into the air is not one bit more real and delightful than are the angels' praises of God. Both child and angel, angel and child, do it because it is life to their life; they cannot help it. And all the ways of the kingdom of heaven are true; like the ways of the children, they are full, and natural, and frank.

So pray do not think of angels as a sort of paid choir, singing in the choir of heaven as our paid choirs sing in the cathedral. They see God's works and ways, and sing because they cannot help it. And all this I learn from their song at Bethlehem.

And this Christmas song compares present joys with joys they had had before. Even as we do when we say, this is the very best of all. Countless years ago, they had seen the little beginnings out of which the stars were kindled to go their shining, silent way through the midnight sky.

But that was not best of all.

Later still they watched Him gently raise a world of mere heaps of stone and water into green branching orchards and sheets of cherry-blossom, and waving fields of breast-high grass, and vast forest-trees, and silvery rivers, and turbulent, sparkling seas to which He set sands and rocks as bounds.

Nor was that best of all.

Still later they had seen Him slowly and quietly shape out of lowest dust fishes and reptiles, and birds and beasts: He filled the earth with life.

"He filled the earth with life."

But that was not the best.

Then last of all, and crowning all, they had seen man. Still they had watched even man's creation with less wonder than they felt afterwards as they saw men and things increase and fill the earth, showing more even than the beginnings of things the wonderful depths of creative wisdom and power.

But even that was not best of all.

Still later they had seen God's ways with minds and hearts, inspiring them with high human aims, teaching them to feel aright, training them to greater and grander dispositions. And they saw how wonderfully the needs of men had been thought of when the fruitful soil was made, and earth prepared so as to bring forth food just suitable both to man and beast. They saw now why, so long before, it had been made just as it was; and why He had arranged darkness between the days, and had taught the moon to practise through long years its silent step. Man would become jaded and need to sleep. All this was still more gloriously beautiful.

At every stage of life His ways had filled them with new delights passing all they had known before. Beauties of creative power were eclipsed by more wonderful beauties of the purposes for which things had been created, till it seemed impossible for His glory to shine brighter, or their rapture and love of Him to rise to higher heights. Through centuries they had gone their astonished way singing with ever sweeter joy, "All Thy works *praise* Thee."

And now, after all, their sense of the blessedness of their King, of His beautiful, bountiful ways, becomes such as they had never dreamed before.

What they see this time is a babe wrapped in a poor woman's swaddling clothes, snug down in the soft hay of a manger; and at the sight they give a cry of astonished rapture. "This," they say, "is beyond all glory, the most glorious of all!" For it was the coming of the holy, mighty Spirit of God in the visible form of man, to raise man to the purity, beauty, and bliss of His own life, and to His own dwelling.

Then, with amazement and surprise and delight and awe, they fall down at that manger and worship. They never worshipped what God had wrought before. But He had done no deed to be compared with this. Beautiful, unutterable glory!

"By this," they say, "shall love of God be won from all nations, and peoples, and tongues." The shining stars had never won this; the sun in his glorious strength; rain from heaven; dear sleep; fruitful seasons; food and gladness—these ceaseless miracles of God—this, none of these had done. But that baby there shall be the Redeemer and glory of the world.

Yes, it was still only a babe, lying in a manger, that was all, beside a pair of travellers, weary, dusty, and poor, resting and sleeping oxen, hay, straw, manure, forks, brooms, buckets, harness—all here and there; that was all. But that was enough. They knew what that birth meant

for both God and man; and they praised God, and congratulated man, and affirmed that such glory had never been seen in their time before.

One angel first appeared, and only one. The gates of heaven opened for him alone. He went forth, maybe, to minister comfort to poor Mary's delicate sense of shame that her motherhood should come upon her there. But holy jealousy seems to have moved the angels then left behind in heaven.

Why should one alone go there?

If one alone could minister, might not all go forth to worship?

I fancy I see them look from one to another with a nameless ache at their heart—the ache, perhaps, of jealousy—for God, you know, is Himself a jealous God; there is a grand and glorious jealousy, as well as a mean and little one. I like to fancy them (and the Bible gives me countenance) gathered around the gates of heaven like some cluster of schoolboys inside their schoolroom round the door, where they gaze, with eager eye and ear and soul, in silent suspense, till the words they look for the master to speak shall be spoken, when that door will fly open, and a free, joyful, noisy stream of lads pour out. Grand and majestic as the angels may be, they have always the fresh hearts of children, and, like those children in the school, I see them at heaven's gate, within, awaiting the word of permission to go. It is no command they want, only permission. And it is given. The word is spoken, "Let all

the angels of God worship Him;" and the bolt is lifted and the gates are opened, "and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest."

They took the jewels and crowns of heaven and laid them at the manger.

It was a high day in the life of the angels, that Christmas-day at Bethlehem; for bright and warm as were their feelings to God till then, they were still brighter and warmer by what they now newly saw of the lowly love and gentle ways of God in this Child-Saviour of the world.

## Chapter XVII.

## YOUNG LIONS AND LITTLE CHILDREN.

**"The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."—*Psalm* xxxiv. 10.**

I have spoken to you about the beauties which may be seen in the spirit of the parent beasts of the field. But after all, beautiful as they are, they are not to be compared with the beauties of the same kind which exist in the hearts of the fathers and mothers of the children of men. Let me show you what I mean, for I want you to climb from the lower kind of parental glory up to the higher, and through that to the highest—the glory of God.

So think of the fact that, after all, the young of the

animal world "*may lack.*" The bravest, strongest, most glorious heart *may* turn cold, shot through the heart by the huntsman's gun. The tiger defending her crouching little ones, thrilling with bravery and love for them, may fall dead.

David's lion, with the meat for its young already grasped, returned to its home no more. That night his cubs' bright eyes peered out into the darkness, but looked for him in vain. They waited long, but he tarried still. Hunger grew pinching; but the accustomed carrier came not with their meat. Eagerly they laid their tiny ears that they might catch the most distant sound of his footsteps; but their ears heard not, for their joy and their love had perished. Their father's heart was cold and still.

So the children of the very monarch of the kingdom of beasts "lacked their meat and suffered hunger." Their father was dead.

But the love of the brute to its offspring does not last even as long as life.

Let the fluffy little chicken get its feathers and become able to care for itself, and you may catch it, and hurt it, and even kill it, and its mother will only run away. Had the very bears I told you of (p. 116), over which the mother wept and wailed her almost human woe, lived but another year, she would have looked at them both lying stretched in death with as little feeling as did the men who shot them.

But the African lion will be most worthy for our illus-

tration, for he is the king of beasts. Look at him, then, in his native wilds in the hour of his terror.

It is night, and dark. He rises from his day's resting-place, shakes his shaggy mane, leisurely swings his tail from side to side meditating his plans. Huge horned buffalo would tremble at the sight; but look at those tiny cubs lying beside him with little upturned faces—they have not one trace of fear.

Suddenly he lifts up his voice, which is like the deep roar of thunder rolling over the plain. At that sound all other voices, far and wide, are hushed in terror except his little ones' voices, which are actually purring like happy kittens.

Now he prowls abroad. From before him the whole animal world flees. Huge brutes hurry away on every side to humbly hide themselves, crouching and trembling in a breathless silence, in the dark shadows of rocks and thickets, till his footsteps have passed by and long died away; yet those very footsteps are ever the welcomest sounds to those tiny cubs in his den, and among their few regrets is, that their return will sometimes tarry so long.

He makes for a drinking-place, creeps softly, marks an unwary antelope bending to the water, and, with deep-toned roar and flashing eyeballs, leaps upon it, seizes it in his enormous jaws, and drags it away to his home.

That roar and those flashing eyeballs, which petrify all other beasts with fear, are lamps of love and comfort and

**" The king of beasts."**

sounds of joy and music to the tiny beasts at home. While others shun him and fly at his coming, their little eyes peer out into the night and their hearts go forth to meet him.

Armed men, too, will dread him.

A whole village will be sickened at the tidings that he is approaching their home. Suddenly, in the dusk, right at their feet, they see the flash of his eye, hear his growl, and feel on their limbs the brush of his shaggy mane, as he plunges in among them, and before they can know what is happening, with one bound he is off and away, dragging one of them with him. The terror of the whole world, he is yet his children's strength and confidence.

Wait, however, till the cubs have grown to maturity, then let them vex him, and he himself will tear them limb from limb. That they should be in weakness and in want, or wounded and ill and hungry, to even their own once patient and tender mother will now matter nothing at all. Thinking only of herself, she will leave them to die.

Beautiful, then, as is the parental fidelity and tenderness of huge brutes while it lasts, it soon changes and dies. The playfulness and prettiness of babyhood once over, love is all over; and ever after, parents and children are each for themselves. Brother no longer knows brother, nor sister, sister.

How different is it among *men*, where sisters love all their life long; where a father finds joy in his children's children; and a mother, with love which lasts even longer

than her children's lives, bends weeping by their grave. She cannot forget.

Mere animal love is soon gone. The days of less than one brief year can separate, do separate, and for ever, the lover and the loved.

Then what a change! Love gives place to wrath, and envy, and malice, and strife, and all hardness of heart! Selfishness, cowardice, and craft now win the day. The maxim of parents and children henceforth is—

"Every one for himself."

"Hurt me, and I'll fight you."

"Tit for tat."

These are the prime laws of the brute world, when the beauty of tenderness is gone, and the glory of love is departed.

In passing, let me remind you how the Bible warns us—boys and girls, and men and women—against all such ways as these, calling them the ways of "brute beasts."

"Everyone" is *not* to be "for himself." If one hurts another, he is *not* to hurt back again. "Tit for tat" is *not* to be our rule; we are heartily to despise it. "Quit you like *men*" is its cry. Love; be kind; be forgiving; love always; love your enemies; do good to them, if such there be, that hate you and despitefully use you. Brute beasts know nothing of doing to others as they would that others should do to them. Only *men*, true men, and Christ, and God do such glorious deeds as these. And whoever

does them most naturally, constantly, and joyfully is most a man, most a Christian, and most divine.

But go back now and think once more of the parent brute in its first Paradise, while its babes and sucklings inspire it with pure, unselfish strength, and it tastes the pleasures of using its power for its young.

Think of that Paradise, with its million of lovely sights: little fledglings in all the nests on clefts of rock and tufts of grass and branches of trees throughout all the world, lulled to sleep by the notes of their father's voice singing in the branches above, softened as it filters through the down of their mother's wings.

Think of the countless little whelps and cubs of bears and wolves and lions, in lairs of grass, and caves of hills, lying beside their mothers' breasts, happy in their sleep, as they dream of the dear brooding, purring sound that last they heard at night, that first awakes their sense at morn, that somehow wins their joyful trust.

Think of this vast charming kingdom of love lying down with love.

That scene of beauty might change in a night, and to-morrow all the love and beauty of each bosom in that whole parent world be cold, cowardly, cruel to those now sweetly, safely sheltered beneath it; and the air be filled with the universal cries of neglected young, suffering the pains of want, dying of hunger. Yes, *all that* is possible before God would cease to be kind to you.

More. Even tender human mothers of clinging human

"With love which lasts longer than her children's lives."

children and their now faithful fathers, all might thus change, and, joining with the brute creation, suddenly cease to have compassion on their young, and even their tiniest mite of a baby be left to die for lack and hunger.

Yet, were that too to happen, one love would be still the same, the love of God.

This is only a strong way of putting the grandeur of the love of God. Lions will not, *cannot* turn cowards to their baby cubs; and long as old nature lasts, they will joy to seek their meat for their hungry young. Fathers and mothers will not cease to have compassion on their helpless babes; ever will it be the fulness of a new delight to live for their good. And in this let all rejoice. But fuller still is the delight, brighter still is the glory of the fact, that our Father, God, is better, tenderer, truer, stronger than them all.

## Chapter XVIII.

## GOD'S FULL MIND.

**"What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?"—*Psalm* viii. 4.**

You have often heard and read the Eighth Psalm; and you will remember how David could not understand the reason for the great goodness of God.

He loved God and he enjoyed His world, and did his best to live a life that would please God. And the more he loved God, the more he enjoyed God's beautiful world, and the more he knew the bliss of hearts that try to please God, the more was he bewildered and amazed at the marvellous kindness which God showed to the children of men. He cried out, "What *is* man, that God's mind is so full of him?"

The world *all* came from God, so green and hilly, so full of foliage and scent of flowers and balm of herbs. Every hill about him was a great piled-up dish of grapes, every valley a vast granary of corn. The whole earth was a sumptuous feast spread for the good and delight of man. What *could* be the reason?

And he looked at the sky when the clouds had rolled away. How could God have made a grander sky if He had been building one even for archangels! Building it so high and filling it with troops of stars with their little spangled crowns, and the kindly moon looking down on men; and the great splendid sun shedding its warm glow everywhere, painting the tulips and roses, and lighting up beautiful holidays in the scented hayfields, and by the summer sea.

And the sea too! That was full of living things, enjoying their life while they might, plunging, and turning, and rolling, and tumbling in endless delight. And the air, too, was full of winged fowl for man; birds came to every tree, bringing songs. Sheep were loaded with wool, oxen dragged the grape-waggons home and the ploughs in the

field. And there was man walking in his summer groves of citrons, and gathering his olives, surrounded by lilies and myrtles, with the soft, sweet murmur of the bees about them, honey-gatherers for him.

And the Psalmist saw him go home on a carpet God had spread under his feet, worked with many-coloured flowers; and he saw him taking his soft, warm, round-limbed baby on his knee, kissing its tiny rosebud mouth, laughing into its two pretty peeping eyes, listening to it cooing its wonderful little tales, and tasting those strange unspeakable joys which are born in us by the birth of frail images of ourselves.

And he gazed at it all—these millions of things which with one accord come into the earth to comfort, and help, and rejoice man. And he saw that it was not the earth that thus cared for us, not one bit; it was vain and silly to think of the earth; then who could it be? It was God. All of it came out of the thoughtfulness of God. A world so full of good things for man meant a mind as full, God's mind, full of man! And with the rest, with all the children of men, he enjoyed them, and for them and for himself he threw up his hands to the blue heavens, and cried, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!"

You have, perhaps, on a Christmas morning seen a company of children enter the room of the Christmas-tree which, till then, had been most sacredly shut up and locked, the tree all full of candles, and all kinds of spangles, and paint-boxes, and dolls, and pocket-knives,

and telescopes, and thimble-cases, and books, and scarves, and brooches, and endless toys, and on all the ground underneath it, carts, and rocking-horses, and bats, and rakes, and spades, and I cannot say what—a very world of glory. And you saw the children, as the sight burst upon them—perhaps you yourself were one of them—fascinated, dazzled, bewildered, almost crazy with delight, and many were their cries of—

"Oh, auntie, auntie; you are good!"

"Dear old pa'. Who told you?—I wanted just that very thing!"

Well, in all that childish ecstasy, in all those shouts of applause, you saw and felt just as grateful as David when, from the sight of this cram-full earth, he turned to look up at God, and cried, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name!" Like those children's hearts, his felt that everything about him was crying out to him to sing, and leap, and clap his hands, and shout aloud for joy; for he had a child's heart, as all people must have who go into the Kingdom of God. The world was to him God's perpetual Christmas-tree, daily loaded with benefits.

Every little child knew that the *tree* was full, but every little child knew, too, that the full tree meant first a full *mind;* somebody's mind—auntie's mind, or mamma's mind, or papa's, or *some*body's, thinking of children's wants and comforts and joys. So they let their hearts go out, not to the things, nor to the tree, but to the living beings who had been so mindful of them. And they felt feelings

"... Birds, enough for our joys."

going out in gratitude were the grandest part of the presents.

And it does us good, too, glorious good, to let the heart go out like that to God. That is, to pour it out before Him. It is to tell that things are full of Him.

Who told Him what we needed? Who instructed Him as to the very things we love? Or who was His Counsellor when He gave us bread enough for our needs, birds and fruits and flowers enough for our joys?

Nobody, my child. He needed no one to teach Him. He knew what we had need of, as all who watch us and love us and understand us must know, out of His own thoughtfulness. He filled the earth with good things, simply because He Himself was full.

But David was bewildered by it all. He could find no reason why God's mind should be so full of man that he must thus store his world with delights; for He had given man a home scarcely inferior to an angel's—those happy, holy beings who do His commandments continually, and in a moment, and with infinite delight. But what is man? Well, some things we know he is for certain. He is disobedient, selfish, a hater of his brother, and thereby the griever of his God. He takes God's good things and never thanks Him, and fancies actually that he owes all good things to the earth and to himself, just as do the poor silly bears that climb rocks to dip their paws in a bee's honey up there; and like monkeys that perch among the top branches of nut-trees, cracking the shells and eating the

kernels. He is, indeed, worse. For he puts God's things to evil uses and turns His blessings to curses. He defies God, and lives as he likes. Yet—and David knew all this, and this was what bewildered David—he is treated almost like an angel; he is crowned like a king, millions of goodnesses are laid at his feet, God's mind is *full* of him.

David could not understand it. They were delightful and glorious facts these, but they were perplexing by their delightfulness, they confounded Him by their glory. What *is* man?

But David could not get any farther than that God's mind seemed full of man.

Sinful man! what *is* he? The answer to that question might clear the mystery, and Jesus shall tell us what it is. But we must wait till the next chapter. Till then remember this solemn and brightest fact, that God's mind *is* full of man, whatever man may be; full in far more glorious ways than even the countless millions of things in the sea, sky, and fields can tell, and let us be glad in Him.

## Chapter XIX.

## WHAT IS MAN?

"What is man?"—*Job* xv. 14.

I WANT to help you to answer this question of David's, What is Man? by telling you a story, the story of Jean Simon Loizerolles.

He lived in France in troublous times, called the Reign of Terror, because men then did such very cruel things to one another.

He was seized and thrown into prison, a prison in Paris, which is, as you probably know, the capital of France.

When the prison warder's lamp had been withdrawn, and the prison door which shut him in was closed, he found himself in a dark stifling place which had only one little lamp high up above reach on the stone walls. The sun

had set; but it was still hot though it was night, for it was in the summer-time. The close place was crowded, and had a strong smell in it, from the breath of so many prisoners huddled together in it. But it was not the close smell that made the place horrible to Loizerolles. He was feeling that he looked round on none but men and women condemned to be killed by having their heads chopped off. That it was which made the place horrible to him.

Some of them, none knew which, would be gone in the morning. Officers would come at dawn, read out a list of names, and the people named would be taken out and put to death.

Which would they be?

He looked quietly round on them as they lay about in the gloom, half-hidden, and was moved to kindly, compassionate feelings, for he was a good man, and loved his neighbour as himself.

Some had fallen asleep, some were awake and turned their heads languidly to see him as he stood there, the last comer. They had all been cruelly taken from their homes, and were shut up for death.

Presently his eyes, becoming familiar with the gloom, could see more. He could distinguish faces; and his look wandered from one to another, all so full of anxiety and despair, and of fever and sickness with the poison of the place. Suddenly his wandering eyes stopped short, as they were passing a sleeper lying on one of the beds.

He looked intently, then his heart leaped into his mouth, his sight became dim, his knees shook. It was! yes, for certain, that was his son! his own son! There he lay in his own blue velvet coat.

The wicked men had seized his son too, and had brought him here, before his father, to die!

His first impulse was to throw himself on the bed and wake him. But he did not. Something said, No; and he only sank down on a seat close by and wept. He would not disturb him. Perhaps, indeed, it might be the youth's last sleep. It might be his turn to die this coming morning. He would leave his child to sleep. His first bitter convulsive tears gave way to quiet ones.

Nobody took any notice of either, for tears and broken hearts were far too common here to attract any attention; he was left quiet and alone.

"Perhaps," he thought again, "perhaps it will be his turn to go out to be killed in the morning!"

But with that horrible thought a new idea slowly started in his mind.

"In the morning," he said; "perhaps in the morning!"

He rose to his feet and paced about, thinking.

Now, everybody was expecting the Reign of Terror, which was then cramming prisons and shedding innocent blood, would not last long. And some idea of this sort was cheering the father, for he was turning his face to his son again, with a new, grave look, which only wanted a

little to make it a smile. He seemed grateful for something.

"If to-morrow! If he will but *sleep!*" he said to himself, then stopped.

"Yes," he added, "yes, that is good. I will go in his stead; I may have the chance to try, at least."

You will see soon what this father is thinking of.

He loved his child better than his life—far better—better than the fair world of earth and sky; for they would be no longer fair if his son were dead. It seemed to him as if the very skies must perish and the sun go black, his very heart must be torn out of his breast, and nothing ever shine again if he lived to be the father of a son beheaded!

The thought was too horrible. His own death was beautiful to that.

If they came for his son, they would call his son's name.

How he blessed God that the same name belonged to them both—yes, they had the same name, and he was here! And the boy might sleep! He had perhaps just come in time.

And now he began to hope that it might all be so, and his son's turn to die come with the morning.

If he would only sleep!

How early would they come?

What time was it?

He took out his watch. It wanted but three hours to

the dawn. And surely the weary youth would sleep three hours, for the young sleep well.

Could he only have been sure that all would have happened just so, he would have been perfectly happy. He could even have lain down for a snatch of peaceful sleep. Could he but be sure!

What time was it now? The time was getting near. How dreadfully slowly the hands of his watch moved! How long were its minutes to-night!

He scarcely dared breathe aloud lest he should disturb the sleeper; for well did he know that if his son awoke, he would never allow him to carry out his saving scheme.

He sat down where the young sleeper's face could be seen, breathing all manner of silent prayers on his behalf, but chiefly that it might be his turn to die in the morning, and that he might sleep on till his turn had passed, and his father had died in his stead.

How he would do it you will know very soon.

How restlessly he looked at the time and at the grated windows for the return of that too slowly coming light!

At length the morning slowly broke.

Then there were heard thuds of distant bolts, and through the grating in the prison door came murmuring sounds as of approaching voices. His heart beat quickly.

They were coming.

Softly he stole to his boy's bedside. He stooped to listen. There was the long, slow breathing of heavy slumber. He heaved a sigh of deep delight, pressed one

gentle kiss upon the uncovered hand, and then withdrew towards the door, to be ready.

By this time it was opening. The next moment a man, with a sheet of paper in his hand, stood within it, two soldiers by his side; and the man with the paper began to read out one after another, pausing after each, the names of the men and women they had come to lead to execution.

The man read aloud.

Loizerolles's heart sprang up, and was almost on the point of imploring him to read softly; he would wake his son, and render impossible his plan. But he remembered just in time that to breathe a word would make matters only worse, and he stood silent.

He had never heard such a voice. Why did the man bellow so?

The fact was the man's voice was not loud; there seemed even a touch of pity in it. But to the father, so sickened he was and anxious that his boy should sleep, every name sounded like thunder.

The prison seemed to swim round; he staggered slightly, and would have fallen, but the last name recovered him.

"Jean Simon de Loizerolles!" was read out.

"Here," said the old man, and he joined the little crowd already gathered at the door, casting back an anxious glance to his boy's bed.

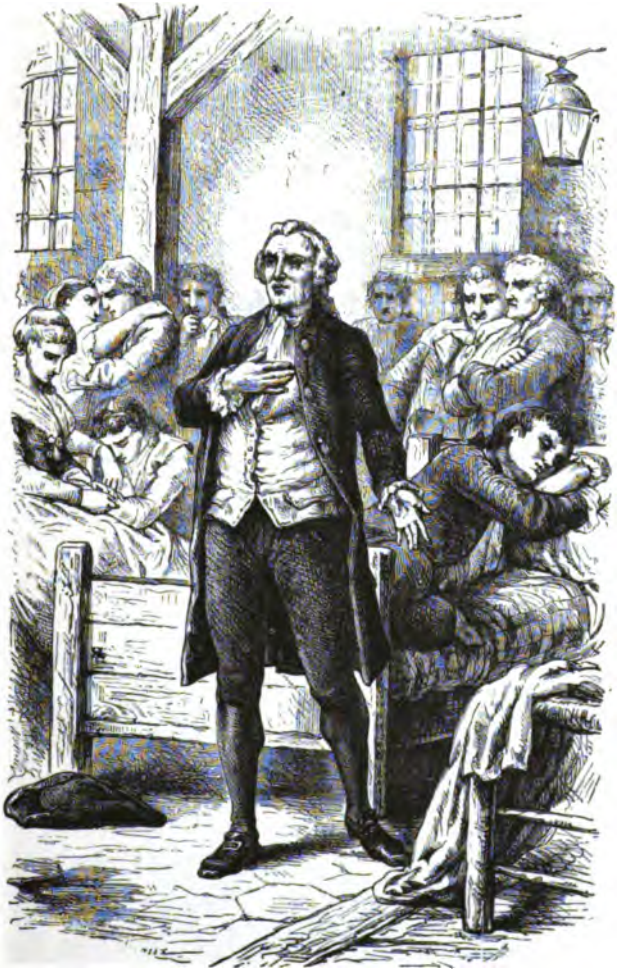
His son still slept soundly, and the father almost fainted with wonder and joy.

In another moment, the little group appointed to death were being marched along the corridors by which they had to pass to the guard-house, and the noble old face was touched with solemn fear, the fear lest, after all, something would happen and he should be stopped. Would they but lead faster! It seemed as though men never walked so slowly.

In the guard-house a difficulty arose. His age did not correspond with the age in the register, and the men argued and vociferated and swore at each other. The prisoner was seventy-two, not twenty-seven. Who had made the mistake? But everything there was done in haste—mistakes were likely enough, they said; that was all!

But the prisoner knew better, and was frightened they would find out. His very heart seemed to stop; this delay was horrible. They would delay and delay till his son awoke. He was almost at the point of pleading with them to let him pass when the whole thing was settled, and they were all suddenly passed on to the fatal cart.

Their course lay through streets, and boulevards, and open squares, whose trees and houses, and statues, and fountains were just being tipped by the rose of morning; but he saw nothing save the vision of a sleeper's face. Was he still sleeping? It was anxiety as to that which made him turn his head so frequently as he went on, and cast eager looks behind. Near as he was to his heart's desire, every moment that heart was more and more



"'Here,' said the old man."

numbed; for he was increasingly afraid that his plans would be discovered, and at the very last would fail.

At length, the streets were all passed, and he was actually standing in the place where the machine was that was to cut off his head, and the executioner was there waiting. His companions' lives were quickly ended, and it was his turn to lay himself down for the last time. He quickly stepped to his place, thankful that nobody had found him out, and that he was now so near the triumph of his plan, yet fancying that still he might hear steps behind him. Quickly he laid his body down; he heaved one deep prayer for his son, "God save my son," and with a smile of quiet contentment upon his face he closed his eyes in death's long sleep, and so a loving father had his way.

You can fancy how sad, how miserable, how dreadfully glorious it all seemed to the son, when his young weary sleep had ended, and he awoke to learn what had happened. Poor youth! It was difficult at first for his fellow-prisoners to restrain him from telling it all to the jailer, and following his father at once to the grave; but that would have been to throw his father's life quite away, and he became contented to live, and he did live; for almost immediately the Reign of Terror ceased, and its prisoners were all released. And, through all his after life, his father's name meant to him a noble, glorious, and sacred spirit.

And what *was* that youth that the man was so mindful of him?

He was his child, his child; that was all, but that was enough.

And what is man that God is so mindful of him?

He is God's child, His child; that is all, but that is enough.

Every father with a soul in him would have done the same for his boy. "Beautiful! glorious!" These are the words that are ever leaping from the hearts of men as they hear tales of true fathers' love. And shall not the Father of all, the truest, most glorious of all, fill us with delight at *His* ways, till we cry out with all our hearts, "Beautiful! glorious!"

David was astonished and bewildered at the goodness of God.

Jesus was not at all so; He admired and adored. But to Him it was natural, for he knew God, and knew that God was

"Our Father."

## Chapter XX.

## A KING'S DAUGHTER.

"The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."—*Romans* viii. 2.

You, I know, love to hear tales of noble friendships. They tell right on the heart like a fresh sea-breeze blowing pleasantly upon the brow on a hot, weary summer day. They are sweet and healthful and strengthening.

But that is not by any means the best part of good tales of friendship. The best of all is that they help us to understand God, and how people who know His ways come to love Him; for when tales of friendship stir life in you, and make your heart throb, and bound, and leap with strong joy and admiration, you have the very best knowledge of

what the hearts of the men and angels feel who see God face to face. They adore Him because of the beautifulness of the spirit of His life.

Jacob, you know, once had a beautiful dream, and in it was a ladder which led right up from earth to heaven, from him to God; and in everything lovely and lovable in people's ways with one another there is a similar ladder on which our thoughts can rise to thoughts of God and His bright and beautiful glory. For the spirit of a friend is the very spirit of God. But you will best see what I mean as I tell you a tale—the tale of Antigone.

Antigone was the daughter of a king, and had been born and brought up in the first house in her land, her father's palace. The king, her father, was called Œdipus. He was king of a country called Thebes, a place about which you may read when you are older.

It was a grand thing then to be king of Thebes; he was a great king and he knew it, and presumed upon it, and did wrong; and suddenly everything turned against him. His courtiers became his enemies, his crown was taken from him; he was driven out from his throne, from his palace, from his city, and from his country, and he became an outcast and a wanderer, footsore and covered with dust, and glad to rest in the shelter under the roof of a ruined hut, a blind, penniless, homeless old man. This was what the great king came to.

It was a strange lot for one who had lived in halls that blazed with gold and precious stones, to whom warriors

had doffed their helmets, in whose presence princesses had been proud to smile, richly robed and jewelled. He had entertained foreign kings and queens at his table. The music and the dancers had moved around him in merry maze. At his bidding great councils of the State had come and gone. He had worn the crown upon his brow that had cost gold and blood. Troops of soldiers had given him homage. He had sent his enemies to prison, and the people everywhere had greeted him with applause and joy. He had been the summit of all.

But life for him had changed in a day. His friends, as he called them, who had fawned upon him as king, did not know him now; why should they? It was the king they had adored, not himself, and he was no longer a king; he was only himself; he was only a man, an old man, a poor, homeless, blind old man. He was nothing more. What did they care for Œdipus? He was a vagrant.

They were what the Bible calls "respecters of persons" —a bad spirit, a horrid and an abominable spirit in the sight of God, who Himself has not one bit of it. It is His glory that He is no respecter of persons. It is men He knows; it is men He loves, not handsome clothes and fine palaces; and if He loves men in these, He loves them when these are gone. He loves them always. Having loved them, He loves them and sticks to them "to the end."

As the fallen king passed through the court to go away, his officers no longer doffed their helmets; they stood and stared at him. His servants might be a little sorry, some

kind soul might whimper a little; perhaps one of his beautiful old hounds came up and, wondering what was the matter, licked his cold shrivelled hand with its warm tongue; for men can sink lower and be farther from God, yes, much farther, than brute beasts. Jesus pictures them soothing and licking poor Lazarus, which is a dog's way of comforting its sorrowful friends.

As the lone old man passed across the courtyard and through the gate where the low, idle hangers-about were crowded, I fancy I hear them laugh a cruel "Ha, ha!" for some, doubtless, owe him a grudge, and find it in their hearts to pay him off now. A wretched spirit is this; for it kills the heart out of people, out of the miserable people who cherish it, quite as much as out of the people who suffer from it.

Wilfully to make bad worse, to add to sorrow, to deepen wounds, to lay another straw on a bitter burden, is to show ourselves to be children of the devil, not of God. It is God-like to bind up a broken heart and soothe it, and not to make it ache and bleed the more.

His sightless eyeballs, his ashen, stricken, withered old face, avail him nothing. He is down, and all the worldly are ill-disposed to those who are down, and most of them laugh at a fall.

He would be glad to hide himself somewhere. Could he but grope his way to one of those huts by his palace-gate which he had so often passed on his prancing charger and in processions of state—perhaps only yesterday!

But if he could, they would not have him.

Why should they? He had got his deserts.

Was there a grave anywhere?

Could he die, could he lie down and be no more?

His heart was freezing in him, he was dizzy. He leaned against his guide, and a few tears started from his sightless eyeballs and ran down his withered cheeks.

He had children and they were there.

But his children stood aloof. Why should *they* strip themselves of honours and comforts for him? To-morrow was the banquet and the dance of the new king! What was a silly old man to them? If they went with him they would only be laughed at for their pains.

Then it was his own fault. He had done wrong, and had been caught in it, and this was punishment, and why should *they* be punished? It was not they who had been caught.

And it was not right to go. It could not be duty to countenance wrong. Justice, yes, justice must be done. What was there better than justice?

A wretched spirit this; for surely there is something better than justice. There must be, for God delights in *mercy*, and what God delights in must be better than what policemen delight in, and magistrates delight in, and revengeful persons delight in. What the wisest, and grandest, and best of beings delights in must be the wisest, and grandest, and best of all the things in the world.

But if such was the spirit of life in them, utterly wretched as it was, better far was it that they should let their old broken-down father go away to sicken and die in some wayside ditch, and stop where they were; yes, better for him.

Living sacrifices are grand and holy things, and they are precious and beloved by God; but living sacrifices are of heart and love, they are made up of joyful impulses, done with easy, unconscious beauty. If a man were to give up his life for God in heaven, or for his father on earth, or for his child, or for anybody whatever, and be killed for them—if there was no *heart* in it, no natural joy in it, he might just as well keep his life, for any good it would do either him or anybody else. Neither heaven nor earth would be one bit the better for it.

So if his children could find nothing in their hearts better than that, it was a very good thing that they should let their blind old father go alone, for they would have been for ever piping and whining about how much they had given up for him, how he had ruined their prospects, and all the rest of it. It is the *grace* of a sacrifice which makes it so precious to man, so beautiful to God; and a wicked heart cannot do anything gracefully. Even its "tender mercies," when it tries to do a good turn, are clumsy, and hurting, and "cruel."

It is the *spirit* in which help is given to the needy which makes it add bitterness and wretchedness to the weary lot, or makes it a lifting up of heart and a sustaining glad-

Antigone.

ness. Yes, rather than have such children with him, better had the old man go his way alone, and quietly perish somewhere.

There is a sinner, but so far there is no friend for him; no beautiful pity, no brave love to sustain, and therefore nothing of heaven and God. Only what the Bible contemptuously calls "the carnal mind."

But the sad old man had one child of another spirit.

The loneliness of her father she could not bear. As they led him across the court to turn him adrift in the world, it seemed tearing her heart out. I fancy I see her as she rises to follow him, her gown snatched at by the courtiers who stand with her at the window, her ears deaf to her brother's pleadings as she rushes down-stairs across the courtyard, crying, "Oh, father, father!" her arms clinging convulsively about his neck, her blanched face pressed to his, "Oh, father, dear father, I will go with you!" with an infinite compassion in her tones.

Then turning her stricken face to the officer of the law, she bids him go away; *she* will guide him. And they march out of the palace-gate, through the now hushed crowd, into a cruel world, mournfully and beautifully—Antigone and her father.

And what were all the pleasant meals, and cosy beds, and merry friends, and gold and marble halls she was leaving behind, when she saw the trembling gratitude of the old man's face, and felt his withered cheek resting upon her shoulder? What was wealth compared with

this? Her heart had the riches of God, and of all loving, soothing, ease-giving souls, for the riches of God may belong to a beggar, and they are simply unspeakable.

The deed was good and beautiful to look at; it was grand, but it never occurred to Antigone that it was so. Her whole mind and soul were absorbed in an overmastering feeling of pity; one terrible pang for him carried her to her father's side; and what she did was never clearer to her than this. She knew her grief had become less grief, and a new deep bliss sprang up within her, when she found herself out of doors in the dark cold world of her unhappy father. She was close to *him;* that was enough.

And so together went father and child, forth into a homeless world, friendless and penniless; the old man sustained on his way by Antigone's strong and patient love. And she was crowned with what the Bible means by glory and honour, as queens are not crowned, and with little between her feelings and the feelings of Jesus when He gives the weary rest and wipes a sinner's tears away.

Something like what Antigone was to her father, Jesus is to us all—as a dewdrop is like an ocean, as a candle is like the sky full of day.

## Chapter XXI.

## THE FEEL OF THE SEA WINDS.

"So is every one that is born of the Spirit."—*John* iii. 8.

Jesus tells us that the Spirit of God may be best understood by thinking of the wind as it softly blows upon the

brow, stealing across the bright blue sea, or gently bending the long grasses of the cool green fields.

When we want to make baby better or mamma stronger, as soon as the winter is over and gone, and the sea has the sun upon it, and the free, warm winds are out, we just take them to some place on the shore, and the feel of the air makes pale cheeks glow with health, and use comes back to languid limbs, and weary eyes twinkle again with healthy, happy smiles.

Jesus himself seemed to love the feel of the sea-winds upon His limbs, and found renewed freshness and life in the air going by Him on a mountain-side, and He took it as an image of the refreshing, renewing power of His spirit in men.

And such is the influence of Jesus upon the soul of man. There is a life-giving spirit in Him. He moves the sickly soul in such sweet and touching and wonderful ways, that it is charmed into health and gladness, and becomes living and beautiful and strong. But you cannot understand this till you know what is meant by "a friend of sinners," for the joys of Jesus, and the sorrows of Jesus, and the power of Jesus are all explained when you in your heart know a good friend of sinners, and see a healthy face grow pale, a pure heart grow heavy and sad, bright and true eyes fill with tears, all for some evil-doer. Till you understand how a pure love can long and long and long for some evil-doer's good, how life can seem worthless, the lovely world of field and sky fade till it is nothing

but a desert, and every prized thing dwindle into small dust in comparison with the desire for his good, you cannot understand the mind which was in Jesus towards this sinful world. When you have seen love like that, my child, and have remembered that its pale face will grow bright again, its heart grow light and glad, its eyes fill with smiles, and life will be all joy, all ecstasy the moment the sinner turns from his sin and enters upon a noble life, *then* you have seen a face like that face which St. Paul saw nearly two thousand years ago, and which has been seen by millions since—the face of the friend of sinners, the face of Jesus.

But that you may understand what purifying power, what lifting up there is in such a spirit, I must go on with the story of Œdipus and his faithful-hearted daughter Antigone.

And a main thing that you must remember is that Œdipus had done wrong; he was cast out of his palace and doomed to wander a penniless beggar as a punishment, a punishment for his evil doings. He was suffering what the Bible calls "a just recompense of reward;" and he knew it.

But Antigone, good child as she was, she had done no wrong, yet she chose a life with him. Famished, homeless, full of weariness and pain it might be, but it was with him. She could give him her arm, and sing to him a little, and strengthen him, and help him to get his daily bread.

Some people said he was an old rascal; but Antigone could not say that, could not feel it, could not even think it. He was a poor, lost, blind old man; her father too, and deeply needing a friend. And all his sorrows were crying out to her to go and live with him and do his poor lone life all the good she could. And she went. She to whom life in a royal palace, with all beautiful things around her, was a home, she went to befriend a homeless, penniless wanderer. Leave him! They might as well tell her to tear her heart away, and make her love perish.

They were terribly poor, were these two. Many a day they had not enough to eat; some days they had nothing to eat; never had they more than they could beg. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but these two had not where to lay their heads. The weary old man's limbs, so long accustomed to the soft repose of royal beds, had to lie on hard, unsheltered ground, or perhaps on the uneven floor of a deserted hut, where his daughter gave her bosom for his pillow.

And the aged sinner was blind, too. All the trees and birds and peeping flowers among the green leaves, and white fleecy clouds flying in the blue heaven, the oxen coming with a waggon, the young mule and its rider scampering by, the faces of travellers and little children, the flash of the sun on a dragon-fly—all were hidden from him. Yet Antigone's love lighted him, and filled his soul with air more refreshing than heaven sends to the

"On the cool bright hills on summer days."

merry lambs and their little bird companions on the cool bright hills on summer days.

People passing saw him, but he moved no pity. It is only God that sees our souls, and people who love us as God loves us, and as Antigone loved her father, with a tender and strong and patient love.

The passers-by did not see his sorrowful soul. They saw only a dust-covered old man, and what was that? A dust-covered old man more or less was nothing to them. They passed on without a kind word, without a word at all.

But for Antigone his black night would have been silent too. But her sweet young cheery voice sustained him, put strength into him, made music in him—music like that the angels sing, music of heaven, which is only another way of saying music of love; for God is heaven, and God is love.

Antigone was there; he could feel her there; she was at his side day and night; that was enough. He leaned on her, and she led the blind, and lifted up the bowed down, and fed the hungry, and gave rest to the weary, and wiped tears away.

Antigone had been a true princess even in her fair palace and courtly dress; for she had been beautiful of soul as well as of form, with all brilliant things around her. But she had never been such a princess as she was now, leading that poor desolate old man along the dusty roads and through burning streets, hungry, weary, and

footsore; begging now and then a slice of bread and a draught of water for him as she passed a door; shedding light, and warmth, and comfort down into his dark, cold, miserable heart. She was his daughter, you say. Yes, but she was not only his daughter, she was the daughter of God, a princess of the house of heaven; for the spirit of the King of Glory was in her.

You cannot be told it too often nor can you cling to it too firmly that it is in God's very heart of hearts to lift up the bowed down, to feed the hungry, to lead the blind, and wipe tears away, even for sinners, and to be their friend. That is the spirit of Jesus; and all who do such work have the feel of the God of heaven in their soul.

And I fancy there were times when the thought of bygone days, the bright memories of the past, saddened Œdipus. He became bitterly ashamed to have sinned away his possessions. How bad and foolish he had been! And the thought dragged at his heart with a weary weight. I can picture him to myself as he feels that he must sit down by the roadside, and great tears slowly trickle down his white, wrinkled, sightless face; and I fancy I see him as he turns to his child, of whose loss he is thinking most, and begs her to forgive him. And she, far more ready to forgive than he is to ask, gathers him in her arms, and lays his head on her sobbing bosom, and does her best to get him not to trouble so. She weeps with the weeper; she is sad for his contrite spirit, and does her best to cheer and console it.

And in awhile I see them get up again and go on again, more deeply precious to each other than before.

It was his memory that made Œdipus wretched; but Antigone's love somehow turned the wretchedness into a deeper joy than he had ever known as a king with his rim of gold and his marble palaces and luxuriant gardens. And pity of his child grew to admiration and reverence. He honoured her beautiful, noble soul; he worshipped her.

And nobody need pity Antigone, nor, indeed, anybody that some poor bowed crushed soul is delighting in. The quiet, deep joy of a living man with whom nobody else will have anything to do is praise enough, and for ever; it is heaven.

If the people of Thebes had come crying to Antigone, all dusty as she was, and faint and hungry, pitying her, as some came weeping and pitying Jesus in His sorrow as He dragged His faint body up Calvary, she might have well said, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children." Why should they pity her? She was mounting up her Calvary, but every step brought her more deep abiding peace.

Antigone was deeply happy, as all hearts are that delight to carry away people's troubles from them, and all the sad things that concern them. This is what we mean when, in the prayer of the Litany, we cry to Jesus, carrying our sins on Him, and all the miserable things sins mean to us, "O Lamb of God! grant us thy peace."

She had some of the peace of Jesus, some of the peace of God, the peace which no sorrows and pains can destroy, which passes understanding: the joy of lightening the burden on her old father's heart, the hope of some day taking it entirely away; and that is a little bit of Christ's own paradise.

And I cannot but fancy, too, that this blind old man would thus grow into his daughter's peace, and—what is still better—into her purity, and old as he was, his heart would become clean and fresh as a little child's. That is to be born again.

And the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has no other end but this.

As we walk day by day with Him, every day He becomes more precious and beloved, and is our life, our air, our breeze, our comfort, our sun; and thus our hearts are gently freed from old habits, and His own beautiful self gradually grows within us. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

## Chapter XXII.

## "WHO COULD WONDER?"

"Dead in trespasses and sins."—*Ephesians* ii. 1.

If you had been with me a little while ago as I walked through a prettily kept village churchyard, you would have felt full of pity, as I did—so full that I was nearly crying for relief.

"There lie the graves of a whole family," said the sexton, who stopped in his digging as I passed, and pointed to two small mounds side by side. He saw that I was a stranger.

"They was all dead and buried in a fortnight; six of 'em, sir. It's a sight to see, is that poor woman as is the mother of 'em, when she comes down here. I've been long at my job, but I've never seen nothing like it."

"And you can't wonder, neither," he continued. "She has laid full down on them two graves and cried till she seemed like dead; and they has had to carry her home again."

And who could wonder?

I had never seen the poor woman; I did not even know her name, not even so much as where she lived; yet there I was almost breaking down with the feeling I had for her dreadful sorrows. I knew dimly how I should have felt had those two graves been mine, and my whole family buried in them.

The same malady, I learnt, had carried her children off, one after another, till all six were dead, and the home was childless.

But only the home. The *heart* was not childless; *that* had children still, though dead; six children, dead: and the poor mother lay stretched upon the graves in which their tender bodies were, yearning and hungering as if she would bring them back again. The *home* had lost, but the heart still held them, and would not, could not, give them

up. Deep true love, which also had once been happy love, was deep and true love still, though it was all turned into yearnings and sorrow and woe.

Now you can well understand that these lifeless children were loved not because they had been extraordinarily good children, but because they were *children*, that woman's own; that was all, but that was enough.

They had had each their little fretful, wayward, and perhaps their little naughty ways, like other children. They had caused care and anxieties too, through little diseases from which they had suffered for a while, and then got well again, like other children. But all the trouble and sorrow that mother had ever known was nothing compared with the trouble, the dreadful anguish she suffered now.

"She lies full down on those little graves," the sexton said, "and cries till she seems like dead."

Now why, think you, have I brought your young hearts to look upon so sad a picture?

Not, certainly, to make you sad, but to give you joy—indeed, to fill you with joy. I want you to see in those two little graves, lying side by side, a picture of some of the children of God; and in that yearning, sorrow-laden mother, a portrait of the beautiful tender glory of God Himself.

For, did not Jesus tell us that sinful people are God's children; and knowing well what deep and touching meaning the word would have to us, he added, but

His children *dead.* And the fact runs all through the Bible.

And what a world of sorrow that little added word "dead" contains. Other words we may speak rudely or harshly, but this one we cannot. It falls from our lips as a tear drops from our eyes—laden with sorrow. We say it to one another reverently, as we say our holiest prayer to God. Strangers hear it and are moved. Friends speak it softly, and with deepest, tenderest awe. We pity and forgive from our very heart even an enemy when we see him stagger to a loved one's grave. Our finest feelings would grow roses at our graves.

And that tender word does not mean one thing to us and another thing to God. God does not shout it in censure; Jesus does not charge it with irritation. It carries infinite depths of compassion and of pity and of woe with it. We are *His* dead.

I cannot tell you what good, what glorious news this brings. It tells us that even the wicked are lying in wickedness as those children lay in that graveyard. They are God's children—dead. Sad it is, very, that they are dead! but it is good and joyful beyond words to tell that they are God's dead; for there is nothing more sure, nothing higher, nothing deeper in all the world than love's yearning hunger for its dead. This is the meaning of all the sorrow of Jesus, and there was no sorrow, not even of that bereaved and desolate mother, like unto His sorrow.

And for what did that mother yearn? What had she lost? Why did she grieve?

But for this, that when she looked her loving look upon her dear ones' faces, no look came back again. When her heart put out its arms to clasp them to her, no arms arose to meet them. When she pressed her passionate lips to kiss their lips, no kiss returned. Her tenderest words they did not heed. Their little forms lay there upon their beds, but they did not know her, they did not love. It was their knowing and their loving that was their life.

Oh for a look or a word! But one look; but one word; but one recognition, "My mother," and what would have been the rapture of that mother's heart! But it did not come, and she said to herself the dreadful word, "They are dead." So from what are the griefs of God, I am led on to see what are the joys of God. Oh for the look and the love! This is the yearnings of the Infinite Sorrow.

Do not think it strange that God should thus long for recognition and love. How can it be strange? Is he not "Our Father"? And what can be more father-like? Fancy a father or mother at the bedside of a child when given up as dying, after all, seeing the little face feebly broadening with a tiny smile, its little hands stretched gently out to touch his, and hearing, however faintly, their name. Then learning from the doctor that life is returning and danger has gone. What would be their rapture!

"Learning from the doctor that danger has gone."

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And do you think that the tiny bits of love you begin to have towards God, and the feeble little looks you turn towards Him, and the faint little recognitions you make, "My Father," can be nothing to God?

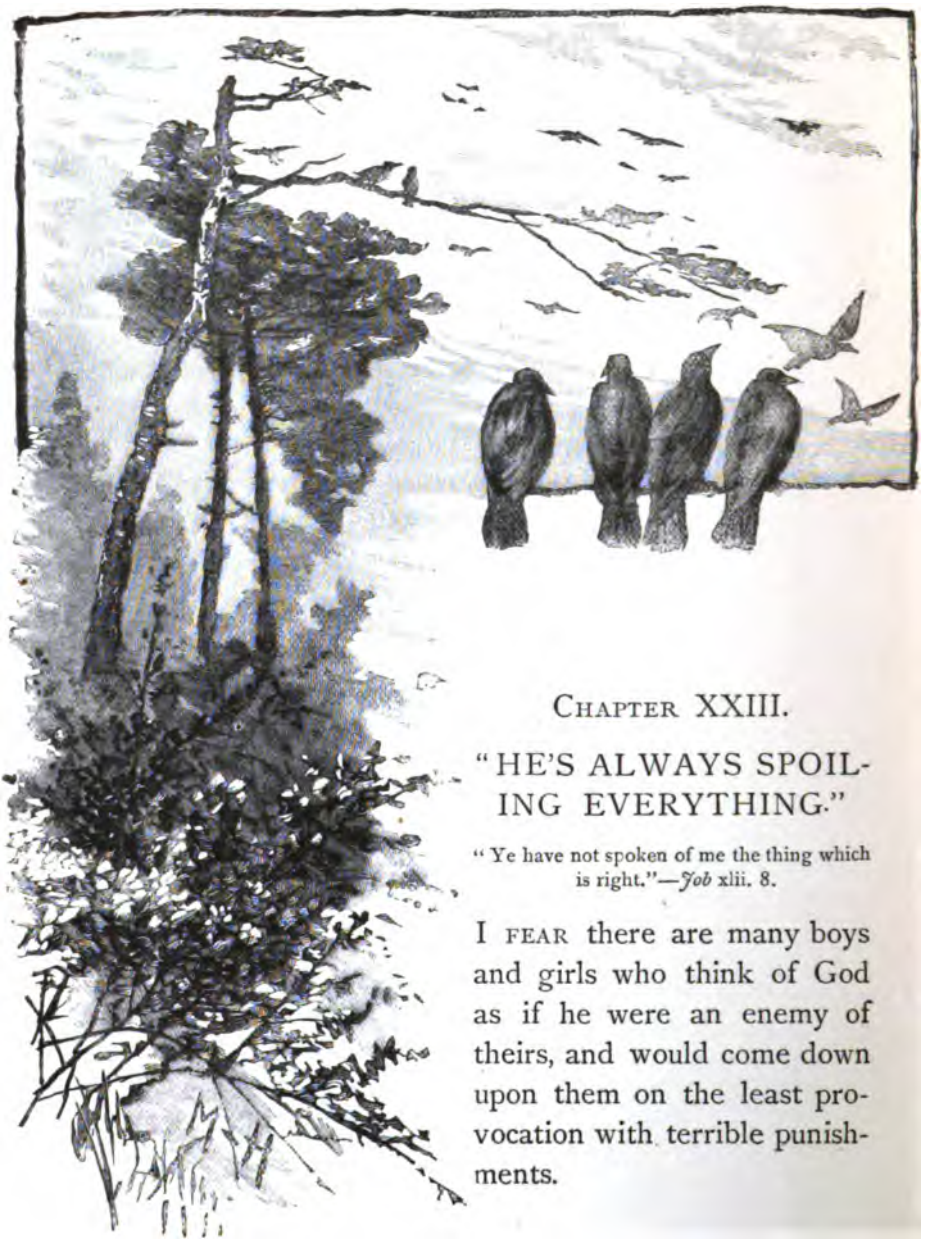
Nothing! My dear child, they are all the world to Him. There is no joy, not even in that rejoicing father, like unto His joy at any signs of returning life.

I speak to you as those who are not dead but living, beginning to live. Your souls are open to God, and He sees them looking their love, and hears their lips speak His name. You live only a feeble sickly life yet, but you live; and God has great joy in your life, and is glad to have the cares of it, for life always brings cares.

You cannot fancy the only trouble that weeping mother had ever known was the trouble she has in her children's death. They had doubtless been occasionally, each in his own way, thoughtless and wayward, and self-willed, and fretful, perhaps even deliberately naughty. They had, doubtless, little ailments needing patient nursing. Her heart ached a little, and her back too, sometimes. But all these things she could bear and suffer gladly; she would endure anything, everything, if but her children could live. So, my child, your heavenly Father can endure and suffer all the cares and anxieties of your little waywardnesses, and thoughtlessnesses, and little heart ailments, and count it all joy, so long as He has your living recognition and childlike love. Greatly would He miss the bright trustful look of your young face. Your com-

panionship is dear. And His one desire is that you may be healthful and blessed, and grow and NEVER DIE.

There is nothing in all the world more natural, more true to you living or *dead*, nothing more sublimely beautiful than a mother's love—except The love of God.



## Chapter XXIII.

## "HE'S ALWAYS SPOILING EVERYTHING."

"Ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right."—*Job* xlii. 8.

I FEAR there are many boys and girls who think of God as if he were an enemy of theirs, and would come down upon them on the least provocation with terrible punishments.

A world without sisters and brothers and parents and companions, in which God had sole charge of them, would, they imagine, be simply awful, more awful than with only a cross old nurse or stern schoolmaster; and they are very glad that they do not live in such a place, and hope that they never shall, for they have no thoughts of Him that are at all pleasant. Indeed, only to be always thinking about what they know of Him would be to spoil the world as it is. So they even think about Him just as little as they can, for the little they are sometimes made to think is all misery to them. Oh, for a world where there were roses and butterflies, and where they were loved and were quite well, and it was very fine weather, if only it was without God. That would be heaven; so in their deepest hearts at least they feel.

And all this is not wicked, for they are not speaking against God at all, but only against something which is not God, and which God made all healthy and noble hearts to hate; and just because they are sick and tired of that false God they hear about, they could love the true God if only some one would tell them about Him. For, my dear child, if you could really love cruelty and peevishness and find-faults, and bigness which was hard towards littleness, and knowledge which measured out severity to ignorance, never could you love the one living and true God.

The children in heaven, Jesus tells us, get right in the front of God to "see His face," His dear and beautiful face; but they would all run away and hide themselves in their

misery, if He were the ugly being certain untrustworthy people make Him out to be. Every one of them would wish just what a bright boy of a friend of mine once wished. Drawing himself up to his height to make room for a great sob, with two big tears mounting to his eager round eyes, he said, "This is a beautiful world. I *wish* it was without God. He's *always* spoiling *everything*."

I am sorry to tell you the story, because it seems to reflect painfully on a well-meaning lady; but I care more for your idea of God than for your idea of this lady, or of any other, even the most worthy in the world; and I want you to know that there are a great many notions of God, and what the Bible calls "lords many and gods many," in peoples' minds. Each person has only one, but each differs in some way from the other, and some of them are altogether false and untrue and very wicked. And I want you to keep these away from you. I want you—I cannot tell you how much I want you—to have no other God but the true God, who was in Jesus.

But let me begin at the beginning, and tell you how it came about that the child wished such a wish. It was, as I gather from his father, something like this.

He was an only child, and unhappily the child of a godless family, who never prayed nor named affectionately the name of God, nor ever taught him one thought about Him.

A day or two before the child's pitiable wish he had arrived at his aunt's on a visit. She was an invalid, and

wanted to see the child whom she had chosen to be her heir, the person to whom she would leave her fine manor and manor-house. He had got into trousers for the first time for the occasion, and had arrived at his aunt's with a heart full of boyish happiness and pride and expectation.

On arriving he had given his auntie one of his own sort of kisses, had enjoyed his meal, taken a beautiful look out at the window, a large bay window high up, and which opened down on the garden and park, and then had gone to bed, and laid his trousers on the chair, happy as a king.

In the morning as he came down-stairs, for sheer happiness, he made certain noises, which young and happy hearts are prone to make. His auntie told him that little boys should not make noises; God did not love little boys that made noises. And he was still and sad.

In the afternoon, when he came in from the hayfield all aglow with healthy joy, he went straight up to his aunt, as if she had been his mother, threw his arms round her neck and kissed his gladness at her. She was a little shocked at such liberties, perhaps a little hurt too, for she was an ailing person, and told him that he ought not to be rude; God did not love little boys who were rude.

Next morning he remembered his instructions and came down-stairs quietly, but after breakfast he went into the garden, and sang out his bottled-up happiness in snatches of familiar songs, which came without thinking about, and seemed to him just to fit his feelings. Auntie overheard him through the open window and called him in. It was

Sunday, and God did not like little boys to sing about what he was singing about on a Sunday.

He was subdued, and went out again, strolling to the stables, where he stood and watched the groom cleaning the horse, his two hands rifling those dear pockets of his into which they were thrust the moment he was happy again, and which seemed full of unsearchable wealth; and his little mouth somehow shaped itself to a whistle, and he whistled as he watched.

By some means his aunt got to hear about this, and before they went to church she had just a quiet word with him, telling him that God did not like little boys that whistled on a Sunday.

It was then the unhappy heart broke down; and standing with his dear face to the window looking out as best it could through its tears, he heaved a big sob, and said, "This is a beautiful world. I *wish* it was without God; He's *always* spoiling *everything*."

This crowned all.

He was not allowed to go to church, for which he was already dressed, and was sent to his bedroom to repent his great wickedness.

By nature the little brave heart could have loved, must have loved, the beautiful God whose name through a long three weeks at her house his well-meaning auntie was making it hate, till God seemed more worriting and disagreeable than she did herself, poor soul, ailing and melancholy there upon her sofa; for Arthur felt some

genuine loving pity for her, she suffered so. And, though he thought she was a very solemn lady, still she was not always eyeing him, and did sometimes seem to think him blameless, and enjoyed his ways and was kind to him, and pressed his cheeks to her lips and kissed him, and let him live with her, though she did think him naughty sometimes. But this same auntie had told him that if he was naughty, God would not allow him to go to heaven; if he was *ever* naughty, he could not go at all. Why *was* God so disagreeable?

Of course he knew that God was very good, in a way; for He had made all this lovely world: the cattle and streams and forest on which he so delighted to look; and He would do anything, as auntie told him, to make her little nephew good; indeed had slain His only son (at which poor Arthur slightly shuddered) for him, if only he would be good.

But God never seemed to care for Arthur himself, as his mother did, and even his auntie did, nor for any of his happy, singing, whistling, romping, merry ways. For nothing, indeed, that live boys love by instinct did God seem to care one bit.

His wanting boys to be good meant only that they should be grave, and serious, and thoughtful, and particular, and still, and solemn above their years—so it had been made to seem to him. He would not allow this, and He would not allow that, till poor Arthur grew quite sad at His ways, and he chafed his brave little spirit against them and resented them.

Oh, if there had only been somebody to tell him, as he lay crying with his face hidden in the soft coverlet of his bed, that Sunday morning at the Manor, that he was chafing against a lot of stories about God—that it was not God at all that he was trembling at and hating, but only a silly goblin said to haunt little children whenever they are naughty, and which people who don't know any better tell them about. If Jesus had been there he would have told Arthur so, and Arthur would have learnt to love God, and would have stuck his hands deeper into those dear pockets of his, and for sheer gladness have whistled his merriest tunes, and have climbed the tree like the best of them at Jerusalem to break branches off to wave, while he sang and shouted his joyous love to Him, as they did.

But, as it was, poor child, there was no Jesus to him, and he had scarcely heard one word about him. God was the name of a strangely disagreeable, ill-conditioned spirit, as unlike Jesus as any two spirits could be unlike one another; whom you must reverence of course, because He was so big and strong, and you ought not to vex, for He followed you everywhere and always.

Auntie said to Arthur that he wanted a new heart, and he quite believed it, if ever he was to love so unlovely and unlovable a being.

A little nervous shudder went through the child as he reflected on his not wanting God, and his wish that there was no God. The idea of a God suited his young heart, for Arthur had a very religious nature, and he feared what

"The cattle and streams and forest on which he so delighted to look."

he had said might not be right, but wicked, and he loved the right and hated to be wicked. And he would have been very glad if he *could* have loved God. He tried to love Him, even as his auntie had pictured Him, but he could not.

He could love his playmates, every one of them, even those who were sometimes disagreeable; yes, these he could genuinely love. But he could not love God. He was very sorry that he could not, but it was no use. His old dog was very beautiful compared with God. Indeed even his delicate aunt was more human and kindly than God. She did like *some* things that he did, and though he was timid in her presence and required incessant caution, yet she often let him go out without her to play in the open fields and the free air and sun, with his young neighbours and the flying birds, and there was nobody to worry him there; but, yes—but God; for auntie had once said *He* was always everywhere.

But his wish was not his fault, and God, I am sure—quite sure—did not blame him; for it was just because God had made the little man's frank, childish heart—made it, too, for the kingdom of Heaven—that it could not one bit love a false god, try as he would, but only the one living and true One. And people were putting a mask on that God, and making His beautiful face quite ugly, as ugly to the angels in heaven—if only they could have seen it—as it was to the dear child at the Manor.

The Bible tells us that people say many things about God

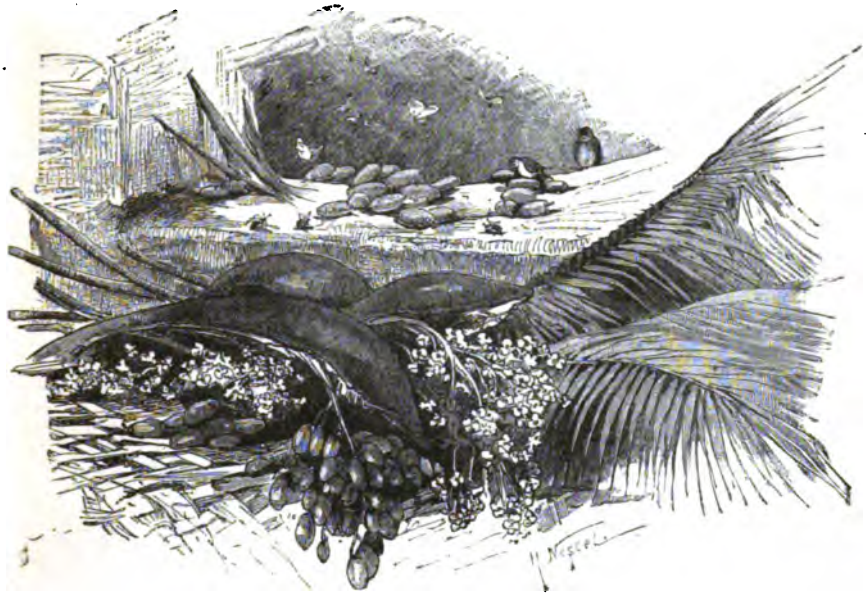
which are not true. It tells us that some very learned and good and solemn people do this, and that some of these once said things of this sort to Job, and God told them that, though they did not intend to tell stories, they had been telling them. Yes, God Himself said, "Those things you've been saying about me are not true," and He blamed them for saying them.

And those good people had made Job very unhappy by the things they had said, and he got fevered, like little Arthur, and he said some rash things, just as little Arthur did, which were thought by those that heard them to be very awful, and if Job had been their "little boy," instead of a grown-up man, they would have sent him off to bed for them, to repent them in his room alone. As it was, they were sure that God would be very grieved and shocked at them.

But God said these people were wrong. Job had said nothing sinful about Him at all. What he had said, which sounded to them so wicked, was against a god who existed nowhere, neither in heaven nor earth, except only in the fancies of these very good and solemn men who had been preaching him.

And the Bible shows us God standing up for poor Job, whom they made so wretched and miserable; and He blamed those good people; and said it was *they* who were in the wrong and had offended Him. And it was they who had caused Job to offend; and so it was they who would have to be forgiven, not Job.

There is only one trustworthy Teacher about the living and true God, and that only one is Jesus Christ. What He says is true; what anybody else says is not true; He Himself is The Truth; we see what God is *in Him*, and all that is not like Him—whoever says it, however old and good and wise they may be, and however solemn their words—is but a more or less false and foolish tale.



## Chapter XXIV.

## "GOD WAS IN CHRIST."

"God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."—2 *Corinthians* v. 19.

The *real* God was "in Christ." And Arthur could have loved Him with all his heart, more than he loved anybody else, and that was saying a great deal; for he had a grand little heart. But nobody told him about Him.

The mother that had sat by his cradle, and the nurse that had taken him walks, and the father on whose knee he sat at dessert when he ate the dates or the figs that God

had made for his joy—all of them good and kind in their way—had never told him anything at all about God. They would have laid down their lives for him; but they failed to do a far better thing for him—to teach him the gloriousness of the blessed God. It was a great pity, a great shame, that it was so; but so it was. And now he was going through life without its very best thing, its very richest joy—the knowledge of the bright and the beautiful God.

So let us for awhile look at the "express image of God" which God has Himself set up in the earth for all the people in it to worship, and which all the angels of heaven worship.

I shall talk to you now about Him only as He is seen with children, and about His ways and thoughts with children. His name is Jesus. He has no marks of God about Him, except the unchangeable grace and loveliness of His Spirit and ways with men. His form is covered with the common clothes of workmen; His feet wear sandals like those on the feet of men about Him, and are white with the dust of the summer roads on which He walks.

The original bright beauty of His face is saddened, partly because people do not behave well to little children, whose small chubby hands and fingers often stroke His beard and welcomely thrust themselves through His flowing hair, and whose round, soft, rosy lips have often met His own in tender pleasures.

Nobody who saw that wayfarer, as we can fancy Him, sitting by a village fountain, talking to a sprightly little

maiden who comes there to fill her pitcher, or the bright boy who passes on his way to the vineyard with his father's meal, ever could have suspected that He was the very image of God.

Still it was so; and now, sitting on His glorious throne among ten thousand times ten thousand angels, with all the power of heaven in His gentle hands, His ways are not one bit more divine, nor the faintest shade more like God, than they were then. He felt at the well as he feels on the throne. Kindlier was He, and kindlier is He now, to little children than all the parents they have ever known or read of. He longed then, as He still longs now, to make children happy. And he *did* make them happy. Never were they a thousandth part so happy, or so free and uproarious in their way of showing their happiness, as when they were at their best with Him.

But let me begin at the beginning.

He had Himself been a real child, a live boy with all the loves and instincts of young flesh and blood, and now, as a man, He did not forget them, not one of them. It is quite literally true that, "inasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might subdue him that had the power of death—that is, the devil." And the little children knew that (without knowing exactly what it meant), for they felt that there was an evil in the world, which, for certain, was all gone when they came near to Him. That something which sometimes crushes a child, and breaks its heart,

and starts scalding tears to its eyes, none of that was in Jesus. Foundlings and orphans, and all sorts of unknown, unfortunate little mortals, felt all their hearts go out to Him and all His heart come into them. With Jesus they had life, child-life—free, measureless, glorious.

He seemed neither a child nor a man, but more than both. Their rosy little feet, as they rambled about, found nothing lovelier than those hearty looks and gentle, graceful ways, which made them begin to understand just why the angels make Him King.

And this was all because His heart was so fresh towards them and towards their little ways. Somehow, they felt that he was "made perfect," just the very thing they wanted—a man's strength and wisdom with a child's heart.

When a boy, He Himself had joined in the games of the market-place, where young limbs let out childish joys in dancing, leaping, running, and blameless merriment. Perhaps the elders of the synagogue looked dark, and the Pharisees scowled, and selfish people looked sour as they passed, and the marketing crowd called it childish trash.

They had to play in the market-place; for they were only children, and no provision was made for children, only for stall-keepers and merchants. And when some ill-directed throw (for in throwing balls young folks have "to increase in wisdom") brought the ball through the air on to one of the stalls, some wrathful fellow jumped up and with flaming eyes and clenched fist came down upon the child, and shook him and struck him, and sent him away without

his ball, and hurt and crying, and the other stall-keepers did not weep with the little mourner—this time not acting a mourner; did not care; perhaps joked and jeered, and said that it served him right. Perhaps Jesus Himself had been one of those saddened hearts.

But, be that as it may, He never could forget the glad, bright days of His childhood, for, some sorrows notwithstanding, childhood is a glad bright time, a beautiful gift of the glorious God, and Jesus never forgot this—the shouting and the dancing and the piping of their merry hearts when school was over; and there was a bit of room where the market was; and nothing now but their supper and bed. He still saw the sight of their merry faces, and heard their honest, hearty laugh.

He could not forget; He did not even need to remember. Those days were not dead; He did not need to be born again to have a little child's heart; the dear past was in Him still; He was the same *to-day*—every day all through His life—and His heart still kept time with the little dancing limbs, and still shed tears when the frank laugh was turned to sobs and pains, and He went so far as to say that men who did not do the same needed to be made little children again, and till then they could neither understand Him nor God. A heart of open, ready sympathy with the joys and sorrows of children, He said, was essential to entering into the world in which He was King.

And all this was in Him, in His voice and in His looks. They did not understand His views, but they could feel

that His coming had made their world sweeter and brighter. Something welcomed their hearts, and cheered them, and drew them to Him, and they could not bear to be without Him.

Never, I fancy, were the day's games half so happy, and never did they feel a quarter so proud as when at nightfall, all aglow with their fun, they chanced to meet Him on their way from their playground to bed. The touch of His hand on their little heads gave a divine finish to the day's music, and a deeper peace to the smiling slumbers of the night.

Jesus was very fond, too, of painting little children in all sorts of lovely and honoured places. People wanted Him to tell them whom He counted greatest in His kingdom, and who should sit next to His throne. He did not want to be cruel to these; yet though there were some before Him who loved Him with all their soul, who adored Him and had followed Him up and down all through the country, and had ministered to His wants, and who had known Him for many years, yet, true to His strongest loves, He called a little child to Him. It would have been untrue to God and to Himself to have passed the children by, for there was more of God, and heaven, and Himself in His little followers than in His big ones.

True, they had not followed Him up and down through the country—their legs were too short. They had not ministered to His necessities, except, perhaps, that some little hand might have shared with Him a slice of its pomegranate; for what had they to minister? They had not known Him

long, but their little open hearts knew Him, knew Him well.

So He called one of them, and set the little fellow in the midst, and said, "There is the greatest; the nearest to the Father."

He loved to tell of children, too, among the angels of heaven, in the place of favour, where they could best be seen by God, and where they could best see Him, right before His face, lifting their smiling faces up to His. And they knew that if God was at all like Jesus that was just the place they should like best to have, for just as the bees love to get at the honey-blossoms, and the swallows long to rest at night in their little round nests under the eaves, these little folks' instincts all went out after Jesus.

Children loved Him to be near them; they were so happy by Him. And yet His disciples told them to go away. They never wanted to be disobedient to the disciples, but no sooner had they been sent away at one point than, I fancy, they were trying at another. They felt that He was made for them.

And so He was, or rather they were made for Him; for that holy One, so kindly, and homely, and good, was the very image of God, and God made all children for Himself; He made them too for His *pleasure*.

And Jesus told the disciples that those little folks there, in their tunics and sandals, peering about, now here, now there, trying to get through where they had been told not, were of the kingdom of heaven, and it was better for people

to be drowned in the sea with a stone fastened round their necks than to drive those little spirits away or do them harm.

And though the little folks scarcely understood what He was talking about, they felt the lovely glow of His life, and knew that they were always welcome to Him, and they could always go up to Him, and speak to Him, and put their hands in His; and there was a general love of Him, and a sense of deeper peace and nobler life with Him; and their open little hearts were loyal to Him.

So without knowing it, the children of Galilee were good friends with the Prince and Lord of Life and Glory, for they found how lovely and good He was. They knew nothing of prophecies or texts; they knew a more blissful life near Him, that was all.

In Judæa there was little chance for these little folks to show to anybody, save to Him who can read hearts, what they really felt towards Jesus. But one day the old people got excited about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, and they gave Jesus an ovation. It was on the road from Lazarus's house to Jerusalem, and they cut down palm-branches, and strewed their garments, and did all sorts of excited things. Now was the chance for the children, and they threw themselves into the joy, and had a splendid time; not that they cared about Lazarus; it was Jesus, only Jesus, they shouted about.

The procession went on right into the Temple. And when the old people entered there, they gave up singing and were quiet. But not so the children. These went on

in their own frank, bubbling-over, joyous sort of way, singing under its very roof in their thoughtless, childish ecstasy.

The sight was as lovely a thing as ever those sacred walls enclosed.

But the priests came up and scowled and grew dark. What were these children doing?

"Silence!" they shouted crossly.

Then, turning to Jesus, about whom the children were evidently making this unseemly noise, they demanded with impatient amazement and angry authority—

"Do you hear? Will you stop it?"

But there was no need for that. I fancy I see the joy and light all go out of the little faces as they are thus suddenly brought to remember what in their thoughtless rapture they are doing; and their singing stops of itself; their lips begin quivering, their glowing faces turn pale, and they look with wide-open eyes and breathless anxiety from the priests towards Jesus. What will *He* say?

A little crowd of officials has gathered round, and they are all dark and scowling at these little impudent sinners, as they think them.

Then Jesus smiles. He has never been so truly happy as He is now; nothing so full of the health and vigour and affection of the praises of the angels of heaven has ever fallen on His heart till now. They see at once that *He* has no sympathy with the angry wish of the priests to silence their happiness; and they are all right. What do they care for the priests now? They had not done wrong.

*He* is satisfied; so they are, and their hearts at least are still merry.

Then Jesus quotes to the scowlers the Bible, which they love so much better than they love the spontaneous hearts of live boys and girls; and the priests are silenced. The little people are silenced too; that is, they cannot sing any more. And they and Jesus walk away together; and though their walk as they go is not so noisy and rompful as it had been when they came, they are simply, deeply, unspeakably happy, and if sad at all, it is only that some people should seem not to love their friend.

This was the image that God set up amongst the children of Palestine. Unhappily for us, both that beautiful figure and the happy children who loved it so are now lost to sight. They have both gone through the pearly gates of heaven, and they are together without priests to plague them in the Temple above in one beautiful ceaseless song.

The image is still set up amongst the children of all the world as the one and only express image of The One Living and True God.

How different the idol, the hideous idol, that auntie set up in the little mind of Arthur! If he could have loved *that* he could never have loved Jesus.

"Little children," said that apostle who got the nearest to the children's place with Jesus, and so was nearer to Him than most of the grown people, "Little children, keep yourselves from *idols*."

God who was in Christ.

## Chapter XXV.

## THE SPIRIT OF THE ANGELS.

"Are they not all ministering spirits?"—*Hebrews* i. 14.

Perhaps you have sometimes wondered what the angels are like. I always think of them as very strong and full of health and vigour, intelligent and obedient to God, but, above all, as affectionate, and tender, and helpful; for God deems them good enough to do much of His tenderest and most delicate, loving work. He sends them out to serve men and women and children who are trying in this world to be good, and are often sick at heart about it, and so are people who need very gentle management.

You will see that angels in picture-books and paintings and sculptures have wings; but you must always remember that the people who have made angels like that have never been inside the walls of heaven, and do not know. It is all fancy. Still, the wings are a very pretty fancy, for the angels are always busy, going about everywhere, up and down, through all God's worlds—much busier than our doctors and our postmen, going their daily rounds with medicines and messages; and what busy man would not like wings to get about with? Wings are so swift and free. So the angels *may* have wings; at least, they do have the free power which wings mean in our minds.

But the wings are not the beauty of an angel, nor is its freedom its joy. An angel's beauty is its heart; its joy is its disposition; and I want you to understand this by looking at all the angels we read of as being about the childhood and manhood of Jesus, and by seeing what kind of things they did.

Boys and girls have a great difficulty in knowing which are the apple-trees, and which plums, and which cherries, and which pears, if they look at them while the trees stand all bare and leafless in the winter time, getting sleep and rest out of the wholesome frosts, as we get ours out of our snug blanketed beds. But they find no difficulty whatever when the branches are covered with the fruit which every tree has brought forth after its kind. Every child of them can tell which tree is the cherry-tree when he is holding the bunch of round, rosy, juicy cherries to his lips, which,

with his own hand, he has just plucked from a low bough he has reached. He knows the tree by its fruits.

And so do we know the angels. It is what comes out of the hearts of them that makes them angels; so we must judge them by *their* fruit. It is all alike with everybody—boys and men, and angels and God too: we must judge all beings by their fruit.

God is good, boundlessly good, just because He does nothing whatever which is not good, brightly, beautifully, eternally good; and He is loved only because He is lovely, and He is worshipped only because His ways pass all ways besides in richness and gloriousness. It is the goodness, deep, tender, awful goodness, of the great God, which at last breaks the hearts of His enemies, bows down the heads of His erring children in penitent tears for their sins, and flings the very holiest angel prostrate in rapture at His feet. It is only because He is so worthy of adoration that all heaven adores Him.

And the angels are His servants, His lovers, and friends, and they have become like what they love, as we all do in time: and so, as they can carry His own kindly, homely, useful spirit into all their ways, He sends them about with his messages and gifts; just as your own mother would send you, were you quite sure to go nicely, with her little present and tender words to the bedridden, suffering, sensitive poor, or to read in her place some story to the lonely blind it was her habit herself to visit and whom she pitied and loved very much.

Now let us see all this in what we are told the angels of Jesus did; and by the angels of Jesus I mean the angels we read about in the gospel stories of Jesus.

An angel came to tell His mother of His birth.

An angel came when Joseph would not marry Jesus' mother.

Angels came at the hour of His birth to the cave, and to the shepherds.

An angel came when Herod would kill Him.

An angel came when His parents were running into danger of his being killed by Herod's son.

An angel came when He was tempted in the wilderness.

An angel came when He was troubled in Gethsemane.

Angels came when He rose from His tomb. And whether they were at His birth, or in the desert, or in the garden, or at the tomb, one spirit, one tender, beautiful, godlike spirit runs through everything that they did.

Now they are touched with the distress in a village maiden's face at the strange, solemn duty God is giving to her, and they try to comfort her and banish fear.

Then they try to prevent a good man doing a good woman a cruel wrong.

Then they take timidity and fear away from humble shepherds' hearts, and inspire them with joy, and send them full-hearted to worship.

Then they prevent Jesus from being killed.

Then they give strength to a heart that is tired and

"Or to read in her place some story to the lonely blind."

exhausted by the long, weary struggle it has just gone through.

Then, again, they are doing the same to one who is beginning to die, and is full of sorrow at the thought of dying.

Then they cheer some broken-hearted women, mourning their dearest friend at a new-made grave.

And last of all they lighten the hearts of dazed, bewildered men, and set idle wonderers to pray, and comfort one another, and to be angels to their sinful and sorrowful fellow-men, so that at last these men themselves actually become like the angels who had talked to them, helpful, loving spirits, and "the angels" to the young Churches of God.

To worldly-minded men, this would seem a great waste of power, a silly life. For the angels are said to excel in strength. But let me impress this upon you—and I feel that I cannot tell it you too often—that greatness in this world's way of thinking of greatness is not one bit, no—I use the word by deliberate choice—not one bit like the greatness of God and of heaven.

What worldly-minded men call silly is just what God calls wise. Occupation in little useful, simple, homely acts was the way Jesus filled up at least his first thirty years of life.

Angels are not great, Jesus was not great, in the way that emperors, and warriors, and engineers, and merchants, and bankers, and book-writers call great. There is not in

all the world, so far as I know, one single monument to the deeds of an angel, and though there are grand piles of buildings erected to Jesus, He attaches no value to them—His one joy is hearts of faith and kindliness. The world has its own ideas of greatness, and ever will have; and its own great days of processions with proud plumes, and gleaming helmets, and bands of music, and banners. But none of Jesus' great ones ride in these. They are most of them standing on the footpath holding their fathers' hands, and looking on these sights with grave, wondering gaze.

But to turn again to the angels. There is never the slightest sign of angels themselves, only of their fruits. When by their doings tears have been dried, an aching heart has been eased, a sickly conscience made healthy and strong to fight and conquer temptation, or a little soul has been made happier for an honestly confessed sin, then men may see "their good works," but never, never themselves! They work only to glorify their Father who is in heaven, as all good souls do, be they angels or men. So they are in secret.

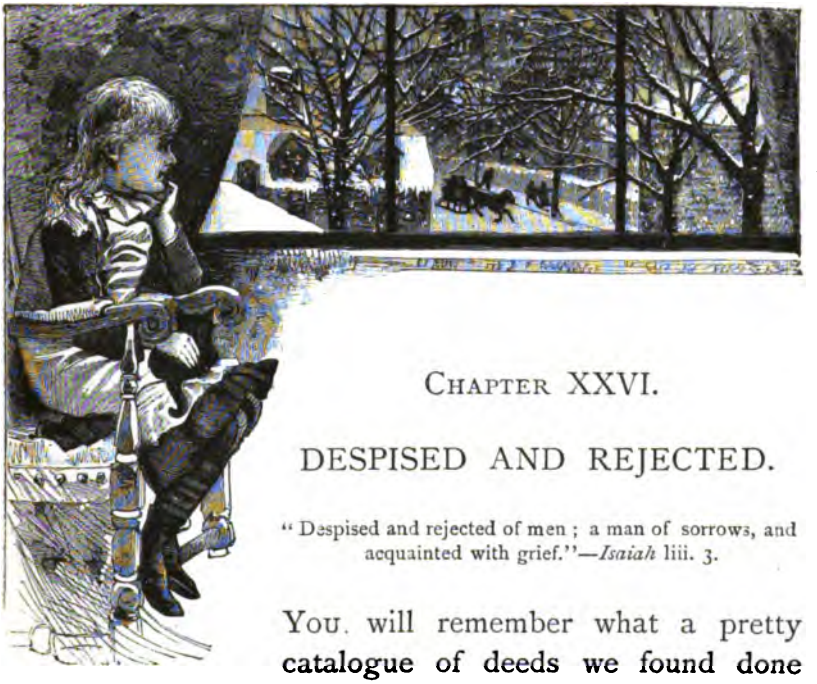
One day John was permitted to see into heaven, and he heard a bright angel talk, and saw an angel's sweet, lovely deeds, and he listened and looked till he could stand no longer. He gave a great sob and fell on his knees at the angel's feet, and could not withhold worship. It was the first homage that an angel had ever received from man, though life, thousands of years, had been one long service to him. And now it was the worship of a soul all beautiful

with love, that had, indeed, lain in the bosom of the angel's Lord.

"Do it not," he said kindly. "I am thy fellow-servant. Worship God."

Well, that is what the angels do; they will *serve* men, but they will have *no thanks*. "Thank only God," they say; "the gifts we bring and the love we bear are His, and for His sake alone."

So we see what is the *spirit* of the angels. They do kind and tender things, but don't want to be known. They do them all for love of God. I will tell you more about the angels when we meet again.



## Chapter XXVI.

## DESPISED AND REJECTED.

"Despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."—*Isaiah* liii. 3.

You will remember what a pretty catalogue of deeds we found done by the angels of Jesus. So pretty was it that it read like the deeds of Jesus Himself, and His own sweet ways with men.

Whether they served a world's Redeemer or only a few poor weeping women, whether they sang, or talked, or only stood by silent, they were always the same tear-drying, soothing, kindly, pitiful, helpful souls.

They appeared like men; but they acted like the good God whose lovely ways they have seen and loved so long that they have caught His Spirit and been changed into His beautiful image, and are like Him; for the true sight of God turns the seeing soul into a beautiful heaven of love.

These, then, are the angels of Jesus, and they still live, and are his messengers to men, and still they speak within men, and still they delight to suggest all holy thoughts, all good desires. And, that you may know clearly what I mean, I will tell you a story of what occurred in the house of an acquaintance of mine.

It is of a little girl who was an only child, and whose parents counted themselves lucky when they had induced a certain rich widow relative to stand godmother to her at her baptism. They did so because they thought that to have such a godmother, so rich as she was, promised a great deal more (and I am afraid they thought a great deal better things) than are required of godmothers in the solemn service of the Church; for they, as you will see, did not live very near to the kingdom of heaven.

One afternoon—a christening anniversary afternoon, when the child was a little over ten years old—there was a ring at the front-door bell, and a lady visitor sailed through the hall, and was ushered into the drawing-room, and the maid took the name to her mistress. It was Laura's godmother.

"Run along, Laura," said her mamma, "and say I am coming directly."

On entering the drawing-room the child's eyes fell at once on her godmother seated in a chair, and a magnificent doll stretched out across her knees. Laura ran up to her, and when the happy, smiling face had been uplifted for a kiss, it immediately fell again to devouring the sight

of the doll. In her wildest, most joyous dreams Laura had never hoped to possess such a beauty as this. But all at once, and in the very height of her gladness, a still higher gladness came to her.

Yesterday, at her own request, she had been with the Vicar to see a blind girl who was ill; and just now a pitiful picture of her had flashed into her mind, sitting up in her bed there, all alone, in the darkness of a child that cannot see and "nothing to play with!" And, in a moment, the two blooming waxen cheeks, the two blue eyes, the long, sunny, silken hair, the radiant raiment and riches of this costly doll her godmother had just put into her hands, saying, "There, that is for you," were all forgotten. Everything, indeed, sank out of sight but that blind child suffering in her gloomy, lonely room; and, in a moment, with the absolute joy of utter self-forgetfulness, out of a heart full of childish pity and heaven, there arose one deep, living prayer to the kind godmother—giver of the gift.

"Oh, please may I take it to blind Alice?"

The godmother was a proud, handsome little woman, who did not at all understand generosity and loving impulse and self-forgetfulness, at least of Laura's kind. She had only bought the doll because it was considered a proper thing for a well-to-do godmother on the tenth anniversary of her godchild's christening.

In an instant she was angry.

"Well, that's grateful, indeed!" she said, firmly clos-

ing her lips for a moment, and drawing herself up with the cold air of a keenly offended dignity. "I wonder what children are coming to!" she continued, and then rose to go.

The child felt a tremor of fear in every limb; her lips quivered; she turned pale and burst into tears. What had she done?

Now she saw neither doll nor blind Alice, but only her godmother's pain; and *she* had caused it; and, following her godmother towards the door, looking up into her face as best she could through tears, she pleaded—

"Oh, I do love it; you were kind. It *is* very lovely."

But her tears and words were all in vain. Without deigning one word in reply, or even a look, the godmother hurriedly opened the drawing-room door, then the front door, and, closing it sharply after her, left the house.

In another minute Laura's mamma in great alarm came down-stairs. She had heard the door; but in her excitement could only make out that Laura had offered to give the doll away, and such a doll! and that the godmother was angry, and had gone. But that was quite enough. She was very angry, and spoke some hot and cruelly unjust words; for she could pardon nothing that had offended such a great visitor, and sent her away in a temper.

Poor Laura was sent straight to her bedroom in her mamma's most haughty tones, and told to stay there for

Laura.

the rest of the day, with the assurance, "I don't know *what* your papa will say when he comes home."

Laura quite hoped that when her papa did come home he would come to her, and she would try to explain. He would understand her. But when her papa did come home his anger was too roused to care to even come to her room, or to care one bit about anything but the miserable vexation of the godmother.

Her tea was sent to her bedroom, but as her papa did not bring it and sent no message, she only spoilt it with fresh floods of tears. She could eat nothing.

And then, too, she was in her best things; for she had made herself spruce, expecting to have dinner with papa to-day, and they had all arranged to press her godmother to stay to dinner with them, and papa had come home from business specially early for the occasion. It was all bewilderment and misery, and the child flung herself again on the coverlet of her little bed, and sobbed as if she would sob her heart away.

And I fancy that if angels could weep—I do not know that they cannot—they would have mingled some of their deep, calm tears with the passionate, heart-broken tears of that little child.

Any way, in *her* a good heart grieved, a holy spirit wept. They were all paining and grieving and putting to shame a little one of the disposition of God, as millions of people all over the world have done both before and since.

As you think of that punished child, you perhaps will

wonder why God allows such things. That He does allow them there is no doubt. But there is a still more perplexing question. Why does God send good thoughts when He knows they will make people unhappy? and the answer is—because there is something better than happiness.

Jesus, who had suffered in much the same way as Laura, said—

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake;" and, as Jesus said that, I am sure and certain that it is true, and that, covered up in that sorrow of hers, behind those scalding tears, that dear child *had* a blessedness, must have had it, for the words of Jesus are always true, more precious far than the vulgar, commonplace happiness which is possible to mere selfish, self-seeking hearts.

And it is thus that we understand the sorrows of Jesus. Goodness, yes *blessedness*, in tears, is the best likeness that little children can know of the sorrows of Jesus, both as a child and as a man—in the schoolhouse of Nazareth, where doubtless blundering man counted him naughty, and in the Garden of Gethsemane, where we know men counted him a sinner. You may think a great deal about the life of Jesus, and His tears and prayers, and about His Calvary, before you will so well understand its solemn meaning and its deep power as you will while in sympathy with Laura lying there face downwards on the

coverlet of her bed, despised and rejected of men, a child of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and they hid their faces from her. Yet she was bruised for *their* iniquities. The sins were not her own. And so the dear prayer of Jesus arose, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." They crucified Him, and thought the sins were His.

And so, my child, let us try to keep a brave heart; ready for all kindnesses, perpetually pitiful, gentle, and unselfish, and let us all remember, too, that it is quite hopeless that we should be always understood by men, even by those who sincerely love us, but especially by those who don't love us, for Jesus was not understood; He was too good, too heavenly, and it is His own sweet voice that says, "It is enough that the servant be as his lord." So say, "Yes, that *shall* be enough"—not praise, not joy, not even peace, but only this—that I should be *as my Lord*, loving and living the good.

## Chapter XXVII.

## A LITTLE ARTIST.

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not."—*Luke* ii. 10.

Why does Jesus so often say, "Fear not"? It is because what He whispers to the hearts of men often brings sorrow, even though it is always a sorrow that turns to joy. That is why He says, "Fear not." And He tells us to judge as we judge the trees of an orchard, by the fruits; and you know that cherries, sweet and juicy as they are when rosy-ripe, are always *sour first.* And so joys that He brings are sorrows first.

And angels of Jesus whisper within us the very same thing.

The gardener does not pull all the cherries off their branches because they are green and bitter; and no sen-

sible boy or girl will refuse to do what is right because that happens to be bitter, for all *God's* painful things grow to pleasant: His bitter is only for a little while. They are disagreeable at first and glorious afterwards.

Let me show you what I mean by the case of a little child of a friend of mine.

Some of my friend's papers were destroyed, he did not know how; but it turned out that one of his children was tired of being alone in his nursery, and, wandering about with nothing to do, passed the open door of papa's study. Suddenly he bethought his little self that he would like to draw, and, going into the study to ask for some paper and finding no one there, he helped himself. Not knowing at all what mischief he was doing, he took up a sheet of almost clean paper from the desk, and sat down on the hearthrug, his little chubby hands making all kinds of figures upon it. When it was all scribbled over—a happy family of ducks, and horses, and dogs, and ladies with parasols, and birds, all of extraordinary shapes—it dawned on his little mind that he might have been using what he ought not to have used, for there was just a bit of writing on it. So as nobody had seen him, he crumpled up the paper, threw it into the red fire, and it all went up the chimney in a little puff of grey smoke. Then he left the study and pursued his little wandering way about the landing, looking in here and there, and after his tour of the rooms was completed he returned to his nursery.

In the evening papa returned to his study, and then his

paper was missed. The study was searched; the housemaid was suspected; the fire-lighting paper was carefully examined; but nothing was found, and there was no light on the subject; and papa was troubled.

The little artist in the nursery, like everybody in the house, heard all about the stir, but he said nothing. By dinner-time in the evening all was over, and every danger of his being found out was past. Papa had settled it that it was one of the mysteries of life, and had nothing more to say. But though papa had no more to say, something had, and Alic had no rest; it kept talking to him. In spite of all his little plans having been so successful, and, as he perhaps said to himself (I don't know that he did), that he had not told any stories about it—in spite of all he was far from happy; indeed the angels were saying things to him that were making him miserable. When he was going to bed he went to kiss his papa as usual, and the father saw the little cloud over his darling's face, and so, father-like, he tenderly gave him an extra squeeze, a longer kiss, and a kindlier smile even than usual, and then went on reading his paper. Then the little cloud got darker. Alic's face turned pale, and his underlip quite quivered.

And something whispered again—

"Tell."

And he did not like to tell. And they said—

"Fear not."

Then the little heart obeyed the angels, and told what he had done, and had a good cry about it; and then, with

a lightened heart, because a truer one, he went his peaceful way to bed.

Poor little soul! When he burnt the paper all scribbled over with the animals and men he thought he had done a very clever thing. He was like all people who do wrong by mistake, and then do another wrong intentionally to cover the first, he did not know what he was doing. It is only God who sees the end of things, and He says—

"*Always* do right," and if you have been foolish and have done wrong, He says—

"Tell; confess your faults, don't hide them."

When Alic burnt the spoilt sheet of paper he showed what the Bible calls the "wisdom of this world," which, the Bible also says, God counts foolishness. And this is the reason why God counts the clever, deceiving ways of wrong-doers' foolishness: they either lay up for the doers of them harder hearts, which are the most dreadful things, or else a good cry about it, and miserable, wretched feelings till it is all made honest, and open, and right again.

And Alic, poor little soul, is after all a picture of every wrong-doer. All little tricks, and schemes, and deceits, and false ways out of blunders, and accidents, and difficulties will bring trouble. The greatest trouble is to lose a sensitive heart, and to get used to acting little lies and doing wrong. And, like Alic, everybody will one day see how silly, how stupid, how clumsy, what miserable blundering all naughtiness has been, even only a little one, a very tiny one. And everybody, like Alic, will just

**"The little heart obeyed the angels."**

wish that they had done the upright and straightforward thing.

He "feared" to do right when he suddenly bethought himself that he might have spoilt paper he should not have touched. But you don't need telling that it was not an angel of Jesus that whispered to Alic the little word "Burn," for he wished a hundred times that he had not done it. And from the beginning of the world, *never* did a soul wish that it had not done what an angel of Jesus taught it to do.

Then angels love children, as all who are like God at all must do; but they never help them out of their trouble by deceits, however tiny the deceit, however great the trouble.

But you are quite ready to believe that it was the angels of Jesus that whispered to him that little word "Tell."

It was a pleasure to them to see his little clouded face quiver with grief, and his two eyes pour out scalding tears of shame as he confessed that he had been all day knowing about the paper, and had not said that he had scribbled on it and burnt it. For when he had passed through this, the little heart within him was its own self again. That was what they wanted.

And it was their own joy his father saw in the placid smile on his face as he stooped over the little sleeping form when he went to bed and gave another kiss to the two rosy, truthful little lips.

Now do you not see what I mean by saying that angels' ways may be bitter, disagreeable things to us *at first*, just

as cherries are when they are tasted too soon, and sweeter than sweetest fruits at last. And that is why the angels so often have to say what they said to the shepherds, and what they said to Alic, "Fear not. Do what we tell you, however painful; what is good, what is right, is always glorious at last."

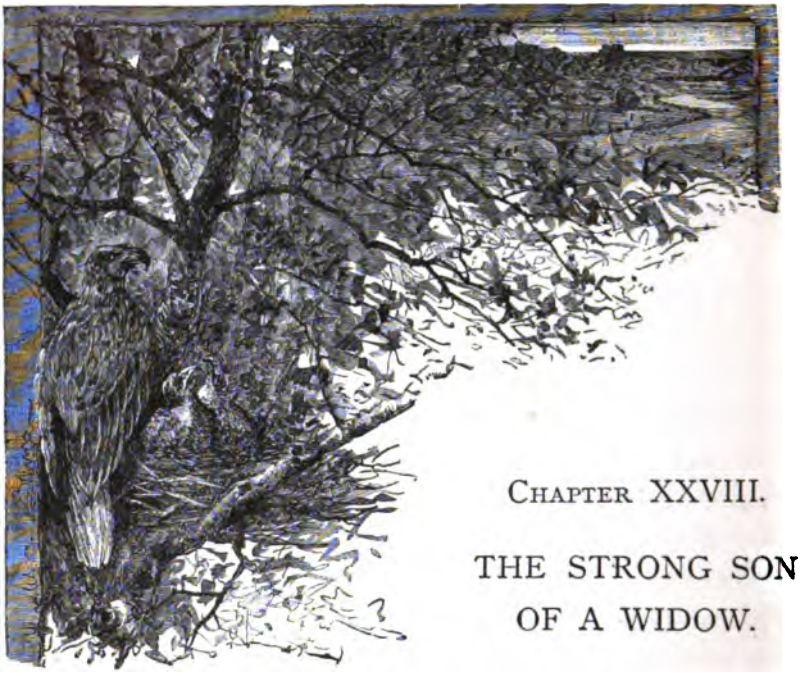
Angels cause pain and bring tears only when there is nothing for it but that, if our hearts are to enter into their own sweet peace and know their heavenly joy.

We are never afraid of the angels; we do not see them. We are never afraid of their voice; it is so soft, and still, and low. When we are afraid it is to *do* what they tell us. It means giving up what we want, telling tales of ourselves, or some sort of smart and shame. But it is always truest love that suggests it, and it is therefore best to do it at once and get it over.

After the "Fear not" of the angel at Bethlehem, suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host singing and praising God. And this is their way perpetually. It is honest hearts, and pure consciences, and clear memories that hear the angels sing. Earth has no music so sweet as the music of a soul set right.

When Alic's father went into his boy's sleeping-chamber that night, his little child

> ". . . . in silence lay
> And heard the angels sing."



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## THE STRONG SON OF A WIDOW.

"Out of weakness were made strong."—*Hebrews* xi. 34.

Now I want you especially to remember that some of the angels of Jesus, of whom I have spoken to you before, are said to have looked like men. They had bodies, solid, and shaped like your body and mine. They had no wings, at least the people who saw them observed none. The form was the familiar, commonplace form of men—the form of their fathers, and husbands, and brothers, and companions who walked with them on the roads, and went sailing with them across the Sea of Galilee when the wind carried out their boats to fish.

There were "two men," it is said, nothing more, only

they had "shining garments" on. But it was not the garments that made them angels, it was their benign and beautiful bearing that made them that.

It would seem as if they sometimes left even their brilliant dress, as well as every other sign of their rank and place, away with their comrades in heaven; perhaps finding it better to do so, lest they should frighten people by the sight of what they would not understand; for we sinful people are not very brave nor very strong. But they never fail to bring their true heart with them, and show us their secret power; for all people like the feel of that.

But they never care to show their fine dress, nor to mark their beautiful works, saying, "This is what *I* did." Not even do they mention their names, except perhaps where they think it will be a little comfort. They lose and forget themselves in the immense joy of helping men and leading them to help one another. That is their strength.

So, sometimes angels appear in the garb of ordinary men, and I am going to tell you about an angel who looked very like a man, as far, indeed, as a little figure could look; for in the height that he stood, and the size of his limbs, and the years he had lived, he was only a boy—a boy just like the rest of the boys which the twelve o'clock school-bell set scampering out on to the green of his own and many another English village to join in the gaiety and noise of the way home to dinner; and who, when the school-bell rings again, go back to their work, sit over their desk at their round-hand copies and long-division sums

till it is time to put on their caps once more, and, for the day, their school is done. He was twelve years old.

But just at the time I am telling you about, this mere schoolboy was a great deal more than most schoolboys, perhaps than any of them, if you consider not his limbs, but the soul that was in him.

Though he was young and short, and slim, too, for his years, cutting quite a little figure, he had a brave heart, which sometimes shone out into his face, and made it good to look at him. And just now that brave little heart was at its best, and it made him exceedingly strong.

He could not lift a hundredweight, nor tear up a tree by its roots, but he did lay hold of two men, and of two grown men, both at once, and mastered them both.

They were strong men, too, as strong as any two men in England, yet the tiny boy was stronger than they, stronger than both of them. And neither of them could get away from his young grip till they had done what he willed.

Let me tell you how. Just then his home was dark and sad. For some days before, the blinds of its little windows had been drawn down all day. His mother had spent those days in shedding bitter tears. His father was dead.

He did not understand—for a child cannot—all the sorrow which a father's death brings to a mother. He saw that the sight of that pale, still face upon the bed there had broken her heart, and he felt for her, and did all that a child could do. He stroked her cheek occasionally, kept

his little brothers and sisters quiet, and spoke and moved in an unusually tender way.

Those days wore slowly on. They all sat about the room in silence. Nobody ate much, or wanted any meals; least of all his mother.

Then the day came when the pale cold form was carried from the hut to be laid under the ground in the little graveyard on the hill. And they came home again without it.

Then the lonely heart had to bestir itself to provide her little ones with bread. And the little man's spirit enlarged. He longed to be of greater use to his mother and his home than he had ever been before. His desires were divine, as all desires are which long to be a father to the fatherless, a husband to the widow.

Presently it occurred to him how he should act. He was big enough, he thought, to give up school and get "something to do." There were the navvy works near. He would try there. He forgot how little he was. It never occurred to him that he might be laughed at. Such a mite of a child to talk of navvy work! To some it might appear silly; but it appeared to him beautiful, and he set out to the proper place to engage himself, his kindly young heart too intent on helping his sorrowing mother to think of aught beside. He would like her to lean on him.

Away he went with his heart on fire with love, his genuine small face beautiful with hope.

If he had thought at all, he would have known that there were many boys at his school whom navvies would have

preferred as helpers. Yet, in spite of their sinew-strength, not one of them could have a spirit to work like his, as it was then; for he was in passionate love with a mother whose heart was broken, and by that, heaven makes a giant of a child.

He reached the works, where great banks were being made between the hills for a huge reservoir of water. All was bustle. He was surrounded by barrows, and spades, and waggons, and horses, and big-limbed men, and by all the nameless activities of a large undertaking.

Nobody looked at him. He felt timid and lost, and could have cried. Then two men sauntered past him.

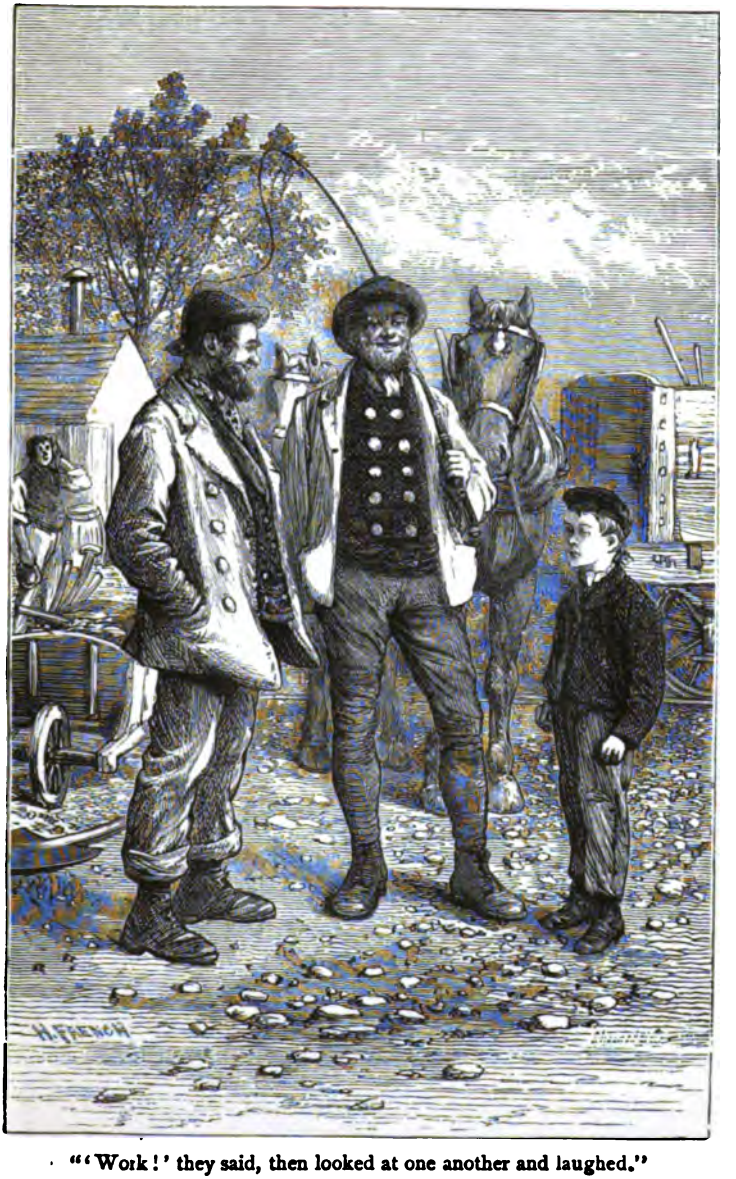
"Will you find me a job?" he said. "I'll work, you'll see," and he looked with sorrowful eagerness straight up into their faces.

"Work!" they said, then looked at one another and laughed.

The boy lacked neither courage nor daring, for he was on the service of a great love; yet he trembled now. A little lump rose in his throat, his lips quivered.

"Will you?" he continued, looking still straight into the big men's faces, much dismayed at their smiles, for he did not understand them. His face was now full of grave, serious beauty.

"Will we? Why, there's nothing of you," one of them said, putting his hand on the little man's head in a tender way, fixing his eyes for a moment on his face, silently taking in all the meaning of its pain-stricken look.




"'Work!' they said, then looked at one another and laughed."

How long the silence seemed to the anxious boy! All his life was in it. What would they say?

"I'll work hard," he added imploringly, forgetting how little his work would be worth; remembering only his mother.

He was all helpless love. His face became, if possible, a tiny bit paler as he spoke, and a little pang passed across it.

The two men could not stand that. His earnest pain was triumphant. Giants as they were, this mite of a thing had something in him which was master of them.

"What is your name?" they asked. Then they learnt that his father had been a comrade of theirs, working by them when the stone slipped from its place up above where he stood, and dropped on him, and struck him to the ground dead; and that this little man's mother was a widow, and he himself was fatherless! They did not make a great fuss about a comrade's death; such things were far too common. But that innocent, small face, beautiful with eager sorrow and love, that now quite mastered them.

"What do *you* say?" said the man with his hand on the boy's head, looking towards his mate.

"Yes," said his mate. "We must find him a job somehow," with more feeling than he cared to show.

So they agreed that the boy was "somehow" to have a job; but they were sorely distracted as to what the job was to be.

It really gave them a good deal of trouble to find work

for a mere child; but they must take it, for it would have given them a great deal more trouble, only of another but deeper sort, to have said "No" to him, and have sent him away.

Then was the holiest hour in the boy's little life. He set off running and walking, walking and running, with the tidings to his mother. He entered their hut, went straight up to her, and said, quite out of breath, "Never mind, mother."

He did not mean, "Don't care about poor father, and forget him now." No, he only meant what the bright angels meant when they said, "Fear not," as they did to the shepherds and to Mary, and to almost all they talked to. Had they been speaking to English shepherds and to an English maiden, they would have probably said, "Never mind," as this happy boy did to his mother. For people who have a similar kind of strength speak in a similar kind of way, and this little brave, gladsome, comforting heart was just now much like the heart of an angel.

"Never mind, mother," he said, stroking her pale anxious cheek, "I'm going to have a job at the works."

"You, my boy!" she exclaimed, and a little smile broke over her sad face—half of it amusement and half of it joy; and she passed her hand proudly across his brow and kissed him, and the crushed woman was lifted up.

And the two men were ever so glad that they had helped him, and the mother was glad that he had helped her, and he himself was gladdest of all.

So you see what I mean by the power there is in a good and noble spirit. It makes even a little child strong to lead and lift up both men and women.

It was only a low, barren, wooden hut, the place where they were, with only two gloomy rooms in it; but just then few of the mansions of the angels, who with bright wings stand before the throne of God, were more full of holy bliss than was that gloomy room. Nothing was between the child and the mother, and little was between both of them and God. They were lost in each other, and in Him; in gratitude, unselfishness, and heaven.

I have called this boy strong, with the angelic kind of strength; for the child upheld the mother.

Food puts strength into us, and so does somebody's unselfish love. The young boy's heart put strength into the grown woman's. That is just the kind of strength in which the angels excel.

Of all the angels, perhaps, the boy was just then most like that particular one who in Jesus' sorrow and dismay stood by Him and strengthened Him. The child strengthened his mother.

## Chapter XXIX.

## A BOY OF "GOLDEN LANE."

"Man did eat angels' food."—*Psalm* lxxviii. 25.

We read in the Bible of "angels' food." That is a charming name, and it is such a charming thing, too, that I want you to have a look at it and a taste of it.

Angels' food! Our fancy goes at once away to Paradise, with its splendid gardens, full of hundreds of wonderful trees, with millions of luscious fruits bending their branches, lading the air with their scent, and filling the eyes with their soft-bloomed brilliant hues of crimson and purple and gold.

In such a place, with free liberty to ramble anywhere and gather anything, the angels must find their food.

But once upon a time *men*, the Bible tells us, ate angels' food, and men who had never been to Paradise. Indeed, no men with their bodies on can go to Paradise; flesh and blood cannot enter there; and it would starve, too, if it did; for there is no proper food for flesh and blood there, and our bodies cannot live without their proper food.

No; it was not in Paradise that men ate angels' food. They were in their bodies and in the world, and of all places in the world, in a desert! It was *there* the story says these men were eating it.

And the men themselves did not know what to call it. It was roundish and white, rather like little lumps of gum or parched corn. They had never eaten such food before; but they ate it now very gladly, for they were terribly hungry.

But how could lumps of whiteness, like lumps of gum, be food of angels? Angels are incapable of eating such things; indeed, they are incapable of eating any food whatever which is nourishing to flesh and blood. We know, to a certainty, that flesh and blood cannot eat the food of the kingdom of God; neither can the angels of the kingdom of God eat the food of flesh and blood.

When men and angels both eat the same thing, it must be because it is food for the heart that is in them; they both alike have hearts. They can worship the same God, and drink in the same glory, and leap with the same

strength, in the *inner man* at least. And if those hunger-stricken creatures in the desert ate their strange food with genuine thankfulness, thankfulness deepened by having just escaped death, most evidently too by the hand of God, their gratitude would be sweet with more than earthly sweetness, and the mighty hunger of their *hearts*, for once, have a feast of thoughts of God.

Was it so ?

That we cannot for certain know ; but *a deep enjoyment of the beautiful goodness of God*, that we do know *is* angels' food, feeding their life to its full.

And that you may understand that this sort of angels' food is not as rare as some people may think, I will tell you of a boy who had crumbs of it all the week, and a good big basketful on one particular Sunday.

In one of the worst of the courts leading out of Golden Lane two children lived alone ; it was no uncommon thing in quarters like these. One, a boy of twelve or fourteen years, went out to sell newspapers ; the other, a girl of nine or ten, lay upon a truckle-bed all day, sitting up only when her brother was at home. She did not undress. Day and night too she lay there in her clothes. She was too weary to dress and undress herself, and her brother did not happen to see any reason why such a work should be done.

He was a true and loyal brother, which was well for her, poor girl, for she had no one in the world besides him to care for her. He would have taken off her clothes for her

and put them on again willingly, but she was such a poor, puny thing, and lifting her about seemed to hurt her.

She often talked of the grave; for her mother was dead, and her father was dead. Her mother had died a few weeks before. She, too, had been puny and ill, and used to lie on the other side of the room and talk to the girl; but now it was so lonely. Her brother was out all day. Now and then she cried bitterly for the dead, but sometimes she cried that she might die too.

She longed for the country. And there the puny thing lay all summer days and nights in a stifling attic, with no sight of a green tree and scarcely any of the sky, while the buttercups bloomed and withered, and the wild rose was in flower, and the hay was made, and the corn was cut all round the cottage where they used to live. But they had left that now.

She was slender and frail now, but she had been a chubby little girl of five years old then, with soft warm limbs, and curls as brown as nuts, which curled of themselves and hung on to her shoulders; and father and mother had taken it in turns to carry her as they tramped up from their village to London, all the way on foot.

It was all long since now, and things were changed. But she had never forgotten the face of her father, always bright, at least when it looked at her on that weary journey; nor of her mother, always sad at her father's choice to come to London. And now the bitter fruit had come; and father and mother had passed away. As little could she

"As little could she forget the hedges and the honeysuckle, the birds and the butterflies."

forget the hedges and the honeysuckle, the birds and the butterflies, and the wheat and barley-fields, where the sun was still shining and the winds blew. What would she give for a feel of the wind on her limbs just now?

"Tom," she said, one Sunday afternoon, as she took him by the hand while he sat by her bed, "do you think I could get out anywhere, just for once?"

"Could you stand it?" Tom asked. "I'd like it very well if you could."

The girl looked a little doubtful, and anxiously said, "Will you try? There's no harm in trying; I should so like it."

Tom's kindly heart was in a difficulty. He knew the sort of pain it would give her to be "lifted and lugged" down-stairs.

But he understood the rare anxiety with which her eyes were just now shining. She panted just to be in the air, that was *all*, and have the light upon her.

Tom put her hat on—his own cap was already on, he seldom took it off—and, throwing his arms round her in the most comfortable, cordial way, he lifted her tenderly and carried her down-stairs into the street.

His sister gave a tiny cry of joy.

The streets were quiet and full of sunbeams, which the wet of a recent shower on the pavement reflected into crystal. A few women stood at their doors and some happy children were playing about.

"How lovely!" the poor girl murmured.

And they sat together on the doorstep, and Tom wound his arm round her, for he thought she had shivered a little.

"Would you like to go down to the Embankment?" he inquired in a while, looking at her happy little face. "There are gardens there."

Her pale, pinched cheeks grew almost rosy, and her two lustrous eyes grew grave and serious.

"Could you manage it?" she said in her humble suppliance.

"Manage it!" he rejoined. And they stretched out their arms to one another and threw them around one another; she clung around his neck, and Tom lifted her up.

There was more than their usual affectionateness in their ways; she kissed him on his cheek, and he kissed her on her lips. They were not given to kisses, but they were uncommonly happy to-day.

They reached the end of their journey once more, and Tom put his dear burden down upon a seat just inside one of the garden gates.

"Dear Tom!" she said softly, as she gazed upon the scene, and her heart was too full. "It is heaven."

And, for deep joy, she began to cry.

And she was right; for Tom and she had never been so lost in the love of one another.

But that was not quite what the poor girl meant. What she saw when the tears cleared away and a pallid smile flickered on her thin face again were great round and oval beds and banks full of flowers—of calceolaria, petunia,

geranium, lobelia—with the autumn afternoon sunbeams full upon them, and crimson and white and purple and gold strewn everywhere about them, a wonderful bewilderment of colour; and they shone with a glory which fields and hedges never had, even in the bright days of her childhood; and the poor heart thrilled with all manner of happy feelings.

And how glad Tom was! Never had the Embankment garden been as beautiful as now; and never had it yielded him a thousandth part of the joy it yielded him now as he saw it reflected in his poorly sister's wonderment. His joyous heart swelled with a deep draught of the waters of heaven. There, in his rags as he stood leaning over the little figure on that chair in that garden, he understood what are the joys of redeeming love. He drank of the streams at which angels drink, and ate their food, and life with him was at its strongest and best.

And there is nothing in earth below or heaven above better than this.

We should never again marvel at the angels' ceaseless ministry if to us the joy of doing good were but as deep and sacred as it is to them. Indeed, you would no longer wonder at all the pain and all the suffering of your Redeeming Lord; it is nothing to the immense delight of hearing this great, sick world of ours in the place where He leads us, once murmur with the deep, spontaneous joy of that weary little child in the gardens—

"It is heaven!"

This is the joy set before Him, for which He endured the cross and despised the shame.

In this, He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. He will forget that He was ever a sufferer, provoked to anger, kept waiting, though waiting to be gracious; He will forget all the Pharisees, and the priests, and the judges, and the soldiers, and the vagabonds, and the thorns, and the old soldier-cloak, and the nails, and the taunts and ridicules; He will forget that He was ever despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; He will forget that people read more and thought more about insurrectionists and murderers and thieves than they did about Him; He will forget that He asked them to do things and they did not, that He was grieved and might be grieved for aught they cared; He will forget all the long centuries with all their deeds of ignorance and coarseness, and cruelty and folly, and vanity and pride: "Our sins and iniquities He will remember no more for ever," in the immense joy that every life is good and every heart is glad. That will be heaven to him too—the people will be all good and joyous!

This kind of food is the food of the heart of Jesus, and all His angels live on the very same kind of food as their Lord.

It is for lack of such food boys and girls and even men and women too perish, and on it they live lives which make their own hearts and their little home-world noble and glad.

## Chapter XXX.

## ANGELS UNAWARES.

"Some have entertained angels unawares."—*Hebrews* xiii. 2.

It is a rough place I want you to come to, for it is a low part of the East-end of London.

But rough places can be made smooth and beautiful too, quite bits of heaven on earth, by the things that happen in them.

And nobody ought to be unwilling to go where the angels of Jesus will go; and for certain they are not at all

particular as to the kind of place they go to, if there is only somebody with a good sensitive heart there. For Joseph, you know, lived, and slept too, most likely, in his workshop, and a very humble one-roomed sort of place it was, in the narrow and not over-clean streets of Nazareth. Angels came, too, to Jesus where He was when a new-born baby, in a stable over-full of camels and oxen and asses, all smelling and sickly as it was with the odour of an extra crowd of cattle in it.

And they have been since that day to some strangely dreary-looking English attics and cellars; and it is to one of this last sort of places I want to take you, to see them doing the very same kind of beautiful work they did in the times of old of which the Gospels tell us.

Come along with me, then, to a spot in Commercial Road, Whitechapel. We shall have to pick our way down the narrow court; but what of that? The people who went to see the new-born King had to pick their way down a narrower and fouler passage than we find here. Perhaps there were no guests invited from Jerusalem to come and see the royal babe in the manger, because they would not have gone to such a place—they could not dirty their shoes. So don't be afraid of dirty places. The angels were not; the shepherds were not. It is too bad that poor people have to put up with them, and Mary and Jesus had to put up with them. But after all, dirt outside of us, bad as it is, is ten thousand times less bad than uncleanness within. Soiled clothes and muddy shoes, Jesus tells us, don't defile

the man; it is wicked thoughts that defile us. The foulest thing in the world is an unclean heart, a heart of bad feelings, and we are going to see a heart which had a good deal of the bright feelings of the angels about it.

Let us first go up to the top of the house. It is high up—up dark stairs. Every room in the house is a house, or all of a house that the people have who live in it; for every room has one family in it, and is their workshop and kitchen, and bedroom, and everything else. The house is a hive of busy people, for many large families live here.

It had once been a grand sort of house; golden blossoms had blown on trees in its garden, and clusters of bright roses had climbed up its outside walls, and bright, happy children, whom no poor person would ever have thought of speaking to, had crowded merrily up and down its stairs; but that was in the old times, long, long ago.

If we open the very top room door and peep in we shall see a little woman sitting up in her bed, bent, and feeble, and old, with two or three short silvery curls showing on her brow under a thick shawl over her head, with a small, shrivelled, brown face. This woman coughs and shivers, and is very thin. But for all that she is as busy as she can be at work. Little bits of wire and brass and a few little tools are spread before her on the coverlet of her bed, and there she sits and wearily coughs and works.

She needs little, but she cannot get that. She can make her little wares by great efforts; but she cannot go out to sell them. A little tea, a slice of bread, and a little

fire to boil her water—these are all she wants; but her tea is all gone, her last crust is eaten, her fire is out, her coal is done.

There are many people like this.

Perhaps it might spoil the play of some little folks to know that the toy scales with which they play were made by the cold fingers of a weary, coughing old woman, struggling for a crust of bread to keep life in her in a bitterly cold attic on a winter's day.

Would that be a pity?

Not if it made them larger-hearted little folks, and pointed them to the graver, more solemn joys which the world offers to Christ-like hearts; for it has deeper, diviner joys, my child, than even good games and fun can give.

This poor soul is making toy scales, twelve pairs for sevenpence. When she is well enough she slowly trudges through the streets from shop to shop, up and down miles of streets, and then returns to go weary to bed. But now the winter winds outside are blowing bitterly, and she is quite too ill to leave her bed.

But something has happened. She coughs, and she is in bed too, but somehow, as fast as she makes her scales they go, and money comes in, and somebody buys her tea for her and lights her fire and sweeps up for her. It is the angels of Jesus. But she never sees them; they do it, just as they delight to do such things, as the Bible would have us do all our beautiful things, "*Unawares.*"

Now let us go down a flight of stairs and look in on one

of the other rooms, and I will show you the way the angels come to her.

It is a little larger than the solitary old woman's, and is crowded; there is a man in it with grizzly, stubbly beard, a mop-head of the same colour of hair, and a hard-looking face, for he is intent on some work in his fingers. If he were to look at a living thing, at you or his wife, you would see the twinkle of two kindly eyes.

His wife sits near him, busy in exactly the same way. She has a shawl over her, and looks rather poorly.

Three young girls are employed in the same sort of work.

They are all sitting around two or three empty orange-boxes, put together bottom upwards to make their work-table; and they all squat on smaller lower boxes around it. Spread before them are piles of empty and clean sardine-boxes, meat-tins, and sundry canisters, and there is the click of little clipping-machines going fast, cutting little circular tin dishes about the size of toy plates.

When all the tins that can be cut out of the boxes and canisters have been cut, they will dip them in something which will make them all look like brass, and, putting them together with little bits of chain and little bars, they will form toy scales. Then they will stamp little weights out of lead, and then put one pair of scales and one set of weights into each of their pile of tiny white boxes. Then the father will go along the streets of the City selling them.

If you had been in a street in London with me in the first months of 1883 you might have seen a man with a shabby black frock-coat, bought from an old clothes shop, and a crushed hat, with rather a comical look, standing in the gutter, and with a wooden tray before him, covered with these little white boxes filled with scales and weights, crying in a low, husky voice—

"Scales and weights, all complete, only a penny."

Well, that was the old man who owns this crowded room, and works with his family on the sardine-boxes and canisters, which he buys at the dust-yards. Their beds are sacking and shavings. They eat little, and work hard into the night at home and all the day long in the streets to get it.

And they noticed that the old woman up-stairs did not pass their door. They did not hear her cough any longer on the stairs; it is always overhead there, in her room. Then something whispered to the old man's heart, "Send her scales out for her."

And he said, "Good; that's good. Yes, yes."

And he told it to his wife, half-starved though they were, and with hard enough work to get the little food for themselves.

And one of the girls heard and said, "Let me do it."

And her mother spared her her shawl and muffled her up well about the chest, for she was ill-clad and not strong. And the girl crept up-stairs, took the poor old woman a bit of coal, lighted her fire, fed her with tea, and then

packed her scales, and went her smiling way from the old woman's attic out from shop to shop, the old woman's servant, one of God's great and good.

The old man belonged to the poorest classes; he could never scrape together more than enough to get a little bread and some weak tea, and now and then a herring. But poor as he was, he was made rather poorer still by giving up a pair of nimble fingers from his ill-paying work for the still poorer woman up-stairs. He had nothing on earth but a few empty boxes, a pot and a jug and a pan, a sacking bed or two, and the few tools with which he made his scales, and he suffered much; but, poor as the set-out was, he "entertained" an angel, and he got high work to do for the King of glory.

But great as it was, so far as the poor man was concerned, he was quite unconscious that he was doing anything at all; the honour was thrust upon him unawares. All the good things the angels suggest will one day seem so strange to hear about, that those who did them will say to their Lord, who notices and notes in His Book of Remembrance all such deeds, "Lord, when did we serve Thee thus?"

Angels always come unawares.

But the old man was true to his poor lonely neighbour in the cold attic above, and kept his girl for many weeks wandering about picking up the few pence needed to keep her alive. And though the old woman was still weary and cold, for her cough was bad and her bed was in the

roof, yet she was happy, and she fell back to sleep upon her pillow at night grateful to the man, but really grateful to the angel that had blessed her unawares. It is the very sweetest part of the angels' work that they never do it "to be seen of men." To do a kindness in secret seems to be their deepest joy.

## Chapter XXXI.

## A GIRL WITH THE SHINING GARMENTS.

"Behold, two men stood by them in shining garments."—*Luke* xxiv. 4.

Now let us have a little more talk about the angels of Jesus, and this time about their "shining garments."

We are all apt to fancy that shining garments must be shining in the same way as the stars are shining, or per-

haps lustrous, brilliant, splendid as the shining garments of a rippled river or a dappled sea, where the high sun's rays fall down with such intense fires, that you cannot bear to look on them. For we have seen, from our infancy, pictures in our Bibles of the Bethlehem shepherds blinking their dazzled eyes at their heavenly visitor, putting their hands up to their brows to shade the splendour, just as men would do when looking towards the clear sun at noon. But such pictures are all fancy, though pretty enough in their way. The brightness and beauty of the angels is well called light, "shining" light, but it is a light which painters cannot picture, nor can candles make, nor lamps, nor, for that matter, stars nor suns; and though it is very strong, and glorious to look at, it would not cause the two little eyes of a child to blink.

Little children, indeed, have often seen angelic raiment. Little children have often *worn* angelic raiment, bright with light shining about it of the very same kind as the light which makes the angels bright, and the light was brighter than the strong sun and moon, and far more worthy of the name of "light" than skies full of sunshine, because, more even than these, it was like the beautifulness of God.

Yet for all that, very likely, indeed, it passed along the streets without anybody turning to look at it; nobody saw it. For remember this one truth, that the light of men, the brighter light of angels, and the full golden light of God, are not light at all save to our understandings. We must *know* something, *understand* something about them,

before we can see the light at all. To hearts that know nothing about Him, God is dull, angels are dull; and people who are at all like God and the angels, they are dull too.

Let me tell you the story of the girl we saw trudging through the muddy streets of London, and you will see what I mean.

She is only a very commonplace-looking girl. I wish that I could truthfully leave out the word "looking" and say very commonplace girl, because I think it would be a grand thing for England if every girl in England had a heart like hers. So I say "commonplace-*looking*," for I fear she is really rather too rare.

But she is *human*. Now that is a sacred name, for God made what is really human, and the devil made what is not. She is *very* human, which means that she has much of the image of God in her. She is unselfish, neighbourly, benevolent, with simple naturalness in her free, kindly ways. She does good without effort, and with that tranquil joy in the doing of it which Jesus calls blessedness.

Now whenever we want to know anything about the angels we must always go to such uncorrupted kindness, to human beings that are very human—men, women, or children who love to serve a needy fellow-creature, who have what the Bible calls *ministering* spirits. It is such people who are most like angels; for the Bible calls them "Ministering Spirits" too; most like also what we ourselves were when God made us at first, when He made us only "a little lower than the angels."

Shining garments of a river.

So when we want to know anything at all about angels we need not, indeed we must not, go to pictures which men have painted who have never seen an angel, nor must we go to the carved figures kneeling and hovering in stone which make the pillars and arches of our churches so beautiful. We must go to men and women with kindly human hearts. These are God's pictures, the images which He Himself has wrought by His own spirit.

How much lower than the angels man's carvings and paintings are we cannot pretend to guess, but we do know, for certain, brave hearts and true are only a "little" lower, just a little. So the brightness of the shining of the raiment of people who have such hearts may be of the same kind, only a little lower; and I think it is so. Let us turn to this girl again and see.

She is the girl who takes out the "bits of things" for the starved, bedridden widow I told you about, lying there all day long in her cold, lonely attic.

She has a black straw hat on her head, bent and crumpled; the brim is almost gone, the bit of velvet on it, with a tiny bit of dull tinsel almost in the front, is crushed; a rough, faded shawl well folded round her chest makes a thick, comfortable bundle; a few thin threadbare petticoats hang limp and wet below; and her elastic boots are patched and shapeless, soiled and sodden with mud.

A faint smile flickers about her hollow, sallow face, where two quiet, kindly eyes look out.

She is short and thin, her voice is feeble and hoarse.

Save for the sacred beauty of her kindly eyes, she has not a bit of the look of an angel.

But you know Jesus did not look much when they were beating Him, and put an old soldier's cloak on Him, and laughed at Him; yet He was the angels' King. So we must grow wiser, and see through the clothes to the soul within to find the angel. Picture her, then, as she wearily trudges from shop to shop in wind, and snow, and rain, with feet wet and numb, the thin clothes clinging about her legs and arms, soaked to the skin. Her chest in its thick shawl and her little bundle in oilcloth alone are dry. Her cough is troublesome. Her limbs ache. She is frozen. She is hungry. She is weary, yet she cheerfully plods along.

Can you not fancy her as the day wanes and the bundle under her arm is not much less, putting on her kindliest smile as she asks a shopman to buy, and with a snappish voice he orders her off? To him people like her are all scamps and vagabonds. Then she timidly opens another door, and this time she is allowed to show her goods; her spirits rise, but the boxes have got a little wet. So she cannot sell at their price, nor can she afford to keep them till they are dry. She will sell twelve for sixpence. They offer fivepence. She is sad, and sells.

Next day she is out again, and aching and faint, and sick of limb and heart, she drags her way on another of the old woman's rounds. Nothing can stop her. She endures it all for the sake of the beautiful fancy at the end

of the day of the helpless old woman in bed, comfortable with her smoking cup of tea.

For five weeks, at dark, she climbs the rickety stairs which lead past her own door to the bitter attic of the widow, enters her room, looks to her fire, puts on her kettle, sets tea and bread and dripping before her, bought on the way home with the profits of her day's trade, such as they have been, and having seen her snug, leaves her a candle and says, "Good night."

Then she creeps down to her father's room, glad to crouch down her weary limbs before its dull cinder fire, takes off her sodden boots—she has no stockings—and thrusts out her two red, wet feet towards the grate with just a little bit of the heavenliest peace in London in her heart —which was the only pay she took. And that she did not seek; it was the angels which insisted on her having it. They call it "the joy of their Lord."

She is poor, despised, numbed with cold, drenched with rain; yet a sweet, satisfied light, that breaks over her face as she cowers there before the fire with her two bare feet steaming in its warmth and her two hands clasped round her knees, is light akin to the light with which angels faces shine; for to-day she has lived like them. She has touched and soothed some misery.

But of the shining *raiment*? Where was there a figure in all those streets so beautiful to your heart? Her bundle, her shawl, her crumpled hat, her soaked petticoats—to your heart, at least, these are bright with a kind of light

that never shines on all the fine clothing of kings. The dear good soul within transfigures the rags without, and a strange beauty is on her.

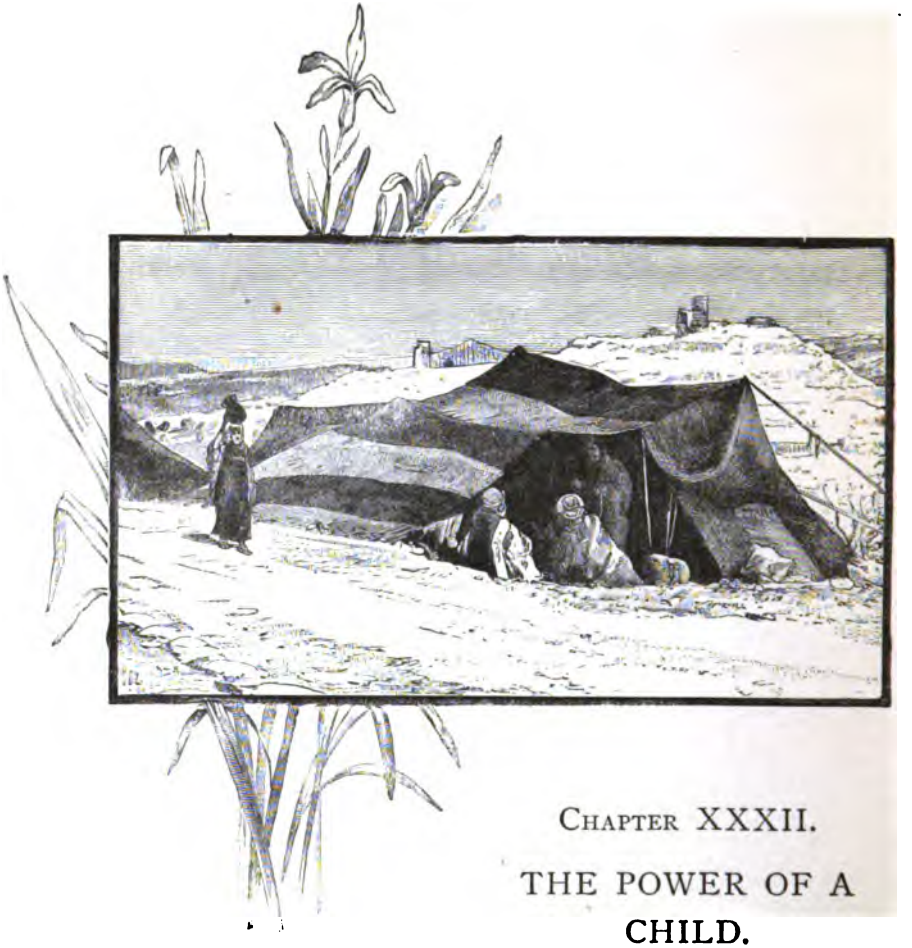
But what, think you, was the feeling of the bedridden woman? To her the clear shining of a summer morning, peeping through her little latticed casements, filling her room when she awoke with heaven's free glory, brought no such light to her poor bed as the appearing of that bundled-up girl peeping through her door night by night, through those long winter, suffering days, all muddy and wet from the foggy streets of London.

For you see the old woman was in a greater darkness than even night makes, as she lay ill and alone and friendless. She had darkness in her bewildered mind, and darkness in her distressed old heart; and this is the kind of darkness, my child, on which angels' light can shine. She was ill, she was old, she was helpless, she was ready to perish; she lay in the great darkness, "the shadow of death."

Feel with that poor woman, and then you can understand how that bundle of shawl was a bright and shining light, to her at least. All the pretty ladies' dresses in the world might have been shown her, but none could have been so beautiful.

And each night at the sight of them the crushed old woman sat up and smiled, a grateful, heavenly smile.

That is what the Bible means when it introduces God to us, and says, "Arise! Shine! for *thy* light is come."



## CHAPTER XXXII.

## THE POWER OF A CHILD.

**"A little child shall lead them."—*Isaiah* xi. 6.**

As I walked the other day towards a green hill with many clumps of trees upon it, admiring its soft beauty as it lay in the early evening twilight, suddenly one of my little companions cried—

"Oh, look, look!"

And he pointed to a place in the trees on the top of the

hill, which had just begun to sparkle and glow with the intense fires of a huge diamond.

"What is it?" he continued. "The trees are on fire!"

It was the large sweep of a curved roof of glass, high enough up to catch the rays of the sun, which, to us, had already set. His level beams had played upon it, kindling it with some of the splendour of his own exceeding glory.

It was *one bit* of the fire of the hidden sun.

Now I want you to turn your thoughts into that heart of yours, and to think of the kind of feel there is in it when you are looking on a little baby. How warm and pleasant and blessed a feel it is. But remember, that that too is only a little of the fire of a hidden sun.

It is a glow of the heart of the living God.

Think of what it would be if you saw a baby, as my picture shows one, under a hedge asleep and all alone. If it were a sleeping man, "only a man" that was there, you might pass by and leave him behind without any particular heartache, but a babe! you cannot do that with a babe. You stop, and look round, and wonder whether anybody will come, and you feel your heart swell within you with tender solicitudes for the little thing, and blessings outpour themselves on it. "You little dear!" you say.

At such a time the feel of God would be in you. You would know in yourself what is the regard with which God regards you and me and all the people of the world.

Think now of the feel in the heart of our own dear Princess Alice, as in her home at Darmstadt she fought with the death that would take her boy away. His disease was deadly; it was dreadfully catching, and therefore dangerous to her, being almost sure to kill. Yet these things could not separate her from her love, nor turn her from the bed where he lay.

How she watched and tended, and yearned over and kissed the palid face, though no smile, no look, no word came back to cheer her; for that little pinched and weary child scarcely knew even that his mother was there. And the more still and deathly and indifferent the little sufferer seemed, the more did the woe of her sorrow increase, the more passionately she kissed, the more yearningly she watched, the more tenderly she tended; till, at length, poor nature failed, the zeal of her love had shattered her frame, she herself fell ill, sickened, suffered, and died. Think of the feel of that mother's heart. What power her child has to kindle it.

Yet intense as that was, it was only a bit of the fire of a hidden sun, the feel which is in the heart of God.

Think too of the feel in the heart of Vincent de Paul one day when he heard the plea of children he had never seen, and who were far away. He was appointed by the King of France as a chaplain or clergyman to the King's convicts. Convicts were a kind of prisoners to whom the greatest cruelties and miseries were appointed, and their sufferings at the time I am telling you about were

"A baby under a hedge, asleep and alone."

simply horrible. One day this chaplain chanced to see the officers of the prison leading to it a man whose quiet face was full of rare depth of woe. He was riveted by the sight, and spoke to the man. "I am a father," he said, encouraged by such a look of sympathy, "I am a father and a husband." He could say no more, and broke down in unutterable grief. He was not thinking of the tortures that awaited him within that prison door, but of his desolate home, and a picture of his little ones who would never see their father more rose before Vincent's tender heart. He could not bear it. "I have no children, I have no wife," he said; and under the impulse of his feelings for little ones, he bade the prison guards take off the chains from their prisoner and put them on to him, and went himself to the dampness and foulness of the prison, and suffered its cruelties; and the amazed man went back to his home to live with his little ones.

It was a beautiful feeling which swelled in Vincent's heart; but the grandest thing about it is that what he felt for those unknown little folks, God feels towards you and me and all mankind. It was a shaft of the love of God.

Think too of the power of a child over the heart of which Jesus tells, a heart in a farmer's house on the plains of Syria. Round about it are groups of graceful, feathery palm-trees and curious humpbacked camels, and the quaint wooden ploughs of a now ancient, bygone world. But within it is a genuine father's heart. One of his sons has pained him and left him, and wasted all his kind gifts, and

sent no tidings of where he is. He has sinned against his love, and injured his health, and spoilt all the joys of his life.

It is now long years ago since he left his father's roof, and through them all every thought of him has brought only pain; and the old father has settled down into a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.

Never even by so much as a word has that boy asked, through all those years, as to whether his father is alive or dead. He has been a grievous, cruel, and worthless son.

Poor, hungry, and in want, he at length comes home, to find that the heart he has grieved and pained for these many wicked years loves him still, loves him with a love that is far closer than his brother's; from which all his shameful sins and wrongs—nothing, indeed—could separate. He is loved as richly as when he played at home, a loving, chubby, pleasant boy.

And the feel of that father, so patient, so lasting, so strong, was but the feel of God to us all. It is a glow of the hidden sun.

Still, warm with the very feel of God as human hearts sometimes are, like the big sweep of that sparkling roof of glass kindling with the light of the setting sun, they are, at best, never more than a tiny sparkle of that glory which is unseen.

And that broad expanse of the roof of glass soon lost its glory, and was black as the night; for the light of the sun had gone. But, gone from that roof, where was it

still? Where!—it was still in the sun; the glorious fires were still burning there. And now for my grandest truth. Should a child lose its power over a father, over a mother, over us all, and we felt no more towards a baby than we feel towards a stone, children would have power over God still, and all lovely feelings would be in Him. "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up."

## Chapter XXXIII.

## THE SOLDIER IN THE SNOW.

"Honour all men."—1 *Peter* ii. 17.

Where are the roses in winter?

What a bright and lovely thing is a rose-garden all covered with leaves and buds and blossoms from end to end, in every shade of pink and crimson and gold, which both men and children can see and smell and pluck.

But how very unlovely it is when the ground is frozen, bitter winds sweep through the air, and the sky is low and dull; when the fields are broad sheets of snow, and rivers are ice. Where are the roses then? There is nothing to

be seen but leafless sticks; nothing to pluck but sharp, prickly thorns. Yet you know that these are *rose-trees*. And the gardener knows it and values them and treasures them, even in all their bareness and ugliness, for hidden away in their heart of hearts they contain the graceful leaves of those loveliest of flowers; and when the *power* comes—yes, that is it, the power—when the power comes, when the ground is soft and the air is warm, and the sun is pouring its floods of golden glory out of a summer sky, then their hearts will stir within them, the lovely things that lie hidden there will creep and creep up the stems, and through the buds and out into the open air, and unfold themselves, till little children's eyes can see and their hands can reach and pluck them, and their little nostrils smell all the sweet scent their loveliness contains.

They are ugly now. But for all that, the gardener is putting straw about their roots, dunging about them, and tilling them. He does not judge by their outward appearance. He knows what is in the hearts of them, and he wants to keep their hearts alive; if he has their hearts, he knows that he shall have their unfolded flowers soon. He loves them, and values them, and cares for them, because of the glory which shall be revealed in them.

And God so loves the world.

It is full of unlovely looking characters, hard and prickly and ugly as the frozen rose-sticks. But be they to our views and feelings what they may, He values all men; He *honours* all men, He *loves* all men.

And He bids us try to do the same; for everybody, even the ugliest, hardest, and most unlovable-looking people have hidden down away in their hearts things beautiful alike to God and man, but seen just now only by God. The whole world is a garden of the Lord's; but in dull cold winter-time God knows what it can be and will be.

And this is what I want you to understand and enjoy: that God knows what is in the heart of man, and this is the reason why, with infinite patience, He cares for and tends and loves the world.

But you will see what I mean by these hidden blossoms in the souls of men by a story. It is now more than sixty long years since it happened. Napoleon Bonaparte—a hugely wicked man—went with tens of thousands of soldiers into Russia to steal from the Russians their towns and villages, to have them for himself. But he did not get what he wanted; for difficulties arose, and he had more to fight than could be fought with guns and swords, or the bravest of men. The Russians fought against him, and these he could beat. But heaven and earth fought against him, and these foes were too great for him. The city in which he would have housed his soldiers caught fire, and the fire rapidly spread. House after house, street after street, it spread, till every street and every house was ablaze, and the city became one vast fire. Of course the soldiers fled from such a place with all speed.

But where? There was no place to fly to, except their own homes in their own country far away; for all the

neighbouring towns and cities were Russian, and of course hated an army which had come to steal their country from them. And, worst of all, the time was winter; they could not camp out of doors; and such a winter as has seldom been. So there was no hope for them but away in their far-off homes; the fire had destroyed their only safe shelter besides; there was no help for it.

So thousands of men set out on a long and terrible journey which was to take them there. Then began a story of suffering past all power to imagine.

They were in a strange land, yet there were no roads nor paths to follow; what roads and paths there were in its vast uncultivated sweeps of land lay deeply hidden in snow. There were not even people to be found to ask the way, nor friendly cottages to offer a moment's rest or warmth. The few straggling woodmen's huts which might lie here and there by their track, like the roads, were buried in snow. No shop offered the means of getting even a crust of bread. They could get no water, not one drop, to quench their raging thirst; springs and streams were all frozen. So cold was it that melted ice scorched and blistered their mouths like burning coal. Freezing winds searched through their clothes and flesh, chilling their very bone to its marrow.

Cold and hungry and thirsty as they were, every mile in the soft sinking snow added the misery of wearying limbs; yet must they hold on, for to halt for even a little rest they knew was certain death. Hour after hour, through long

days and longer nights, they stuggled on towards home. Pitiless snows fell in thick, blinding storms, settling on them in great masses, adding heavy weight to carry, soaking them to the skin. And with their wearying load, every step sank deeper into the soft, hampering road. Their aching legs swelled; their soaked feet broke into sores; their lips split and bled; their ears became raw; and strong men cried out like children in pain.

Every hour, through days and nights, to one after another the suffering and struggle proved too much; they fell into a deadly sleep and dropped torpid upon the road.

One of these was a little drummer-boy. He had a sturdy little heart and had made long and manful efforts to keep up with his big and stronger companions. The burden of his drum, light as it was, was rather against him; but he had kept his legs till now. He could do so no longer. He stopped, staggered a little, dropped his drum, reeled a second, and then fell stretched upon it. It had come to be his turn to die.

His party moved on, doubtless a little sad to leave a mere child to die; but times were stern, and they had enough to do to take care of themselves.

A second party came along the track, frozen, disabled, haggard as the rest. Some looked at the little drummer, some half stopped, but all passed on. Everybody was silent.

A third party staggers up, frozen, disabled, haggard as the rest. But one of this party looks at the boy and stops.

His face is flat, pale, swollen; his big lips look sour; his brow is low and frowning. He seems wearier and more haggard than others, and there is something about his desperate looks which would have alarmed you. His life, you would have thought, must have been a very terrible one. And very likely it had been; for he bears a wretched name among his soldier companions, who themselves are not over particular.

But this one man stops by the boy.

The sight of the little fellow, after all his brave strugglings, lying there stretched upon his drum, left to die, is too much for him. He feels something choking rise in his throat. He cannot, and come what will he will not, leave him. In a passion for the boy, he bends forward, lifts him up, and rouses him.

Unable to speak, he makes signs to some who are passing to give him a helping hand, and the boy—drum and all, for the bewildered little fellow is clinging to his drum—is hoisted up on this man's back.

It was a little while before he could quite steady himself to start. Then, with raw feet and aching limbs he set out, himself and his new burden, to do the rest of the weary way home. And who could say what would be the end? And on they tramped?

And how did it end?

Long before the terrible journey was all over, many of those who had seen and passed that outstretched boy on the roadside themselves were exhausted and done, and

fell down upon the snow and died. Only a very, very few of all that set out from that burning city for home ever reached their journey's end. But whether because of the extra warmth which came from those two little legs dangling down over each side of his chest—for two cold bodies can make each other warmer—or whether it was because of the extra thrill and power which so noble an enthusiasm imparted to his failing heart—giving warmth and strength to his spirit and his limbs and to all that made him a man, I cannot say; but be this as it may, you will be very glad to know that among that very, very few, the man with the drummer-boy on his shoulders was one. He and his burden both reached home. You may fancy, without any telling of mine, what gratitude, wonder, and joy there was among the brothers and sisters and father and mother of the saved little man. But the man that carried him had bliss too, and I fancy most of the bliss.

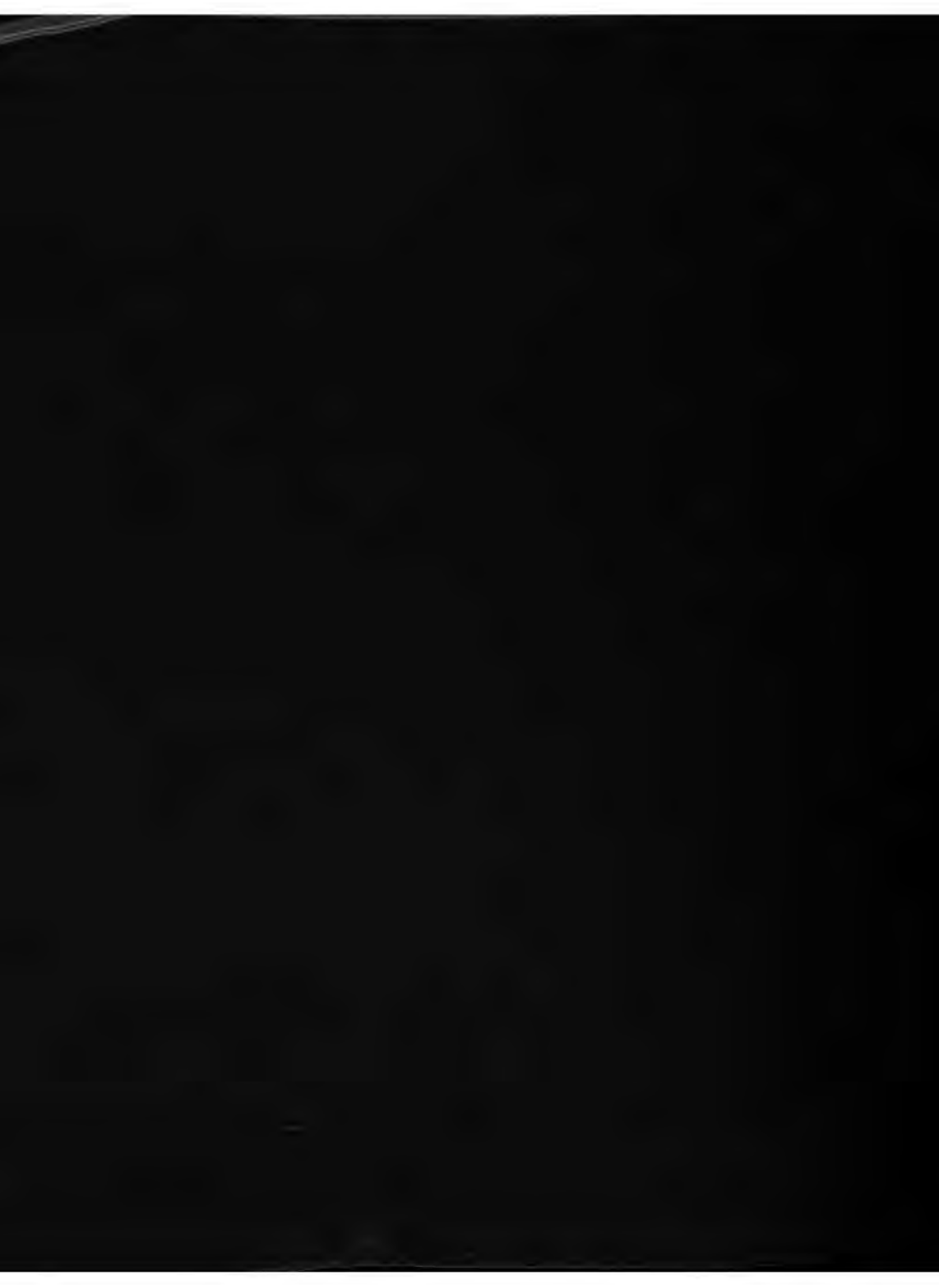
Perhaps to have passed the fallen child would not have been wicked. We can hardly *blame* those men who feared to increase the awful weariness, difficulties, and dangers of their terrible lot; but if we cannot blame them, neither can we admire them. Their conduct might be human, it was not divine. The man who thinks most, not of himself, but of another; the man that *must try to save*, even if in the trial he lays down his own life, he it is who is lovely, lovable, and divine. For his is the disposition of the beautiful and blessed God as seen in Christ. "*He* saved

others, Himself He could not save." That is why even among despised and outcast people Jesus found friends.

And I have told you the story of this particular man because till that hour he had been counted bad, the worst of his set. Yet all the while he contained, hidden away down in his heart of hearts, loveliness, lovely both to God and man. It lay there waiting for the power to touch it into life and bring it out to sight; and pity did it.

Perhaps, after it was all over, the rose was out in the cold again, and the roots won back the brightness and perfume beneath the hardened ground; but, if that were so, it was a rose-tree still.

Oh, my dear children, love everybody! Honour all men! Secret glories lie in them all, however hard it may be to believe it. God believes it, and that should be enough.

THE END.

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